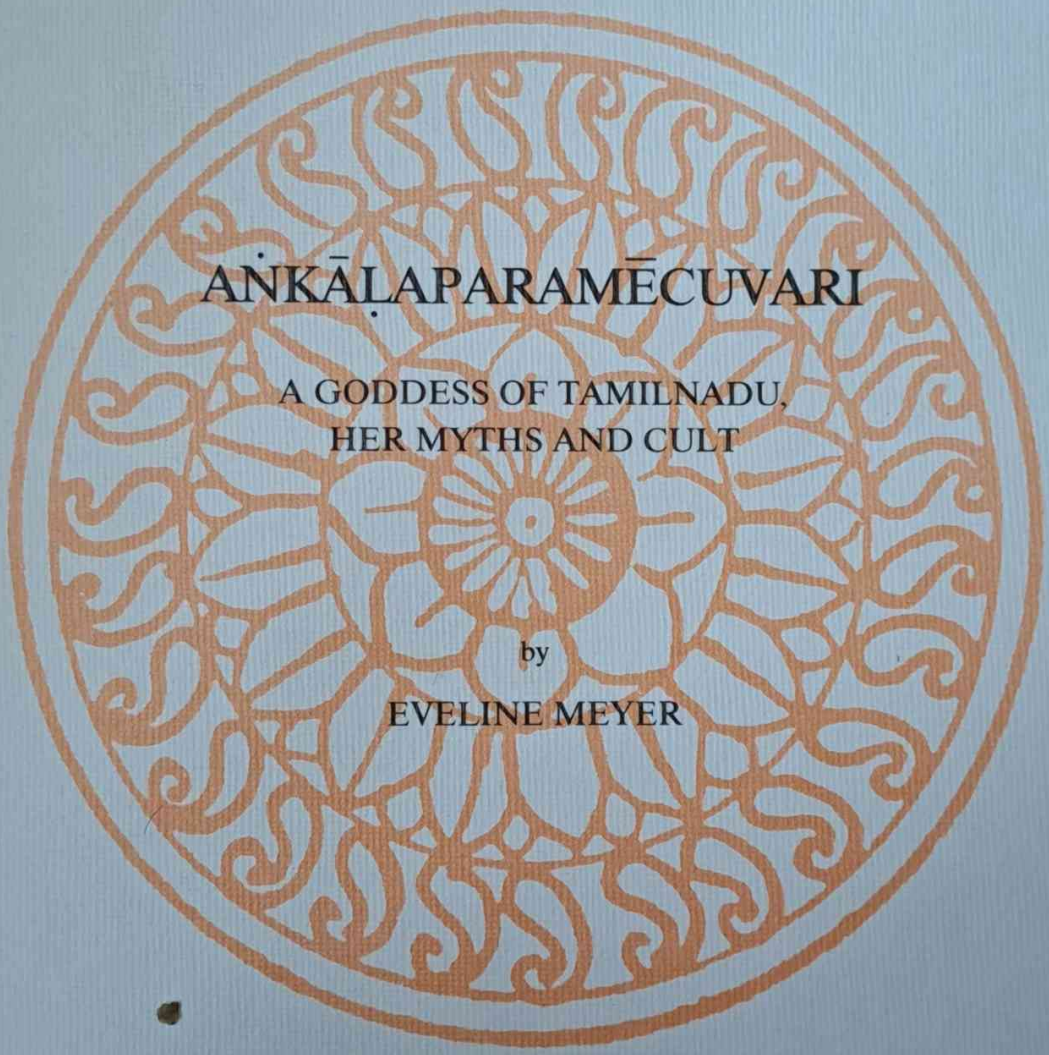
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107



AṄKĀḶAPARAMĒCUVARI

A GODDESS OF TAMILNADU, HER MYTHS AND CULT

by

EVELINE MEYER

FRANZ STEINER VERLAG WIESBADEN GMBH

E. MEYER

AṄKĀḶAPARAMĒCUVARI

€ 59,00

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	i
Fieldwork	v
Acknowledgements	ix
Note on transliteration	xi
I. The Myths	1
Introduction	1
The *pampai*	3
A. The history of the Goddess	6
B. The image of the Goddess according to the myths	39
1. Introduction	39
2. Creation	42
3. The establishment of the goddess on earth in an anthropomorphic form	48
3.1. The goddess' expulsion from heaven	48
3.2. The goddess' settlement on earth	49
3.3. The goddess' forms	50
3.3.1. The seven sisters	52
3.4. The chaste goddess, the theme of the union and separation	54
4. The manifestation of the goddess in an non-anthropomorphic form	58
4.1. The termite hill	58
4.2. The grinding stone	59
4.3. Moving the goddess from one place to another	62
4.4. The concept of '*cāmi*'	64
5. The goddess' function	66
6. Conclusions	68
II. Temples, Iconography and Castes	70
A. Temples and iconography	70
1. The temple (*kōvil*, *kōyil*)	70
a. Location	71
b. Age	72
c. Structure	74

PAGE

2. Iconography (the goddess and her attendants) 75
a. Aṅkāḷamman 76
a.1. Her name 76
a.2. Her iconography 78
b. Pēcci 80
c. Other deities in the Aṅkāḷamman temples 81
d. Macāṉiyamman 84

B. Castes 85

1. Paṇṭāram 87
2. Mutaliyār 88
3. Nāyuṭu 89
4. Vaṉṉiyar or Paṭaiyāṭci 90
5. Ceṭṭiyār 91
6. Ācāri 93
7. Tēvar 94
8. Kavuṇṭar 95
9. Cempaṭavar 98

III. The Festival (*tiruvilā*) 105

A. The core rituals 105
1. The time of the festival 106
2. The rituals and their sequence 106
3. Description of the core rituals 108
3.1. Vālācāpāt 108
3.2. Teḷi 113
3.3. Āṉaimalai 116
3.4. South Arcot district 121
3.5. North Arcot district 132
3.6. Chengleput district 136
3.7. Coimbatore district 137
3.8. Salem district 142
3.9. Madras city 144
3.10 Trichi and Tanjavur districts 145
3.11 Madurai and Ramnad districts 147
3.12 Tirunelveli district 150

PAGE

4. Some reasons for the variations of the core rituals 153
4.1. Purity 153
4.2. Lack of Funds 155
4.3. Community cohesion 156
4.4. Geographical considerations 157
5. The elements of the core rituals 158
5.1. the *kapparai* 160
5.2. the figure in the cremation ground 167
5.3. *piḷḷaippāvu* 173

B. Myths 3 and 12 176

1. Myth 12: Śiva's brahminicide 176
2. Myth 3: Vallāḷārājaṉ 184
2.1. The king (variations) 185
2.2. The goddess (variations) 187
2.3.1. The goddess and the king: *vana* and *kṣetra* 193
2.3.2. The virgin mother 196
2.3.3. The Vallāḷa myth in the *Aruṇācalapurāṇam* 198

C. Meaning of the core rituals 202

1. Meaning of the pattern 205
2. Purpose of the rituals 220
3. Features of the core rituals shared by rituals for other deities 226
4. Dakṣa's sacrifice 231

D. Other rituals 234

1. Flag hoisting, tying of *kaṅkaṇam* 234
2. The pot (*karakam*) 235
3. 'Tests' (*pariṭcai*) 237
4. *alaku niṟuttal* 238
5. *kuṇṭam iraṅkutal* (walking over hot coals) 242
6. *pārivēṭṭai* (chase, hunting) 244
7. *teppam āṭutal, mañcaḷ nīr āṭutal, tēr* 247

PAGE

IV. The goddess and her devotees 250

A. Means of communication 250

B. Possession and impersonation 257

V. Songs in praise of Aṅkāḷamman (Literature) 264

Appendix

Songs of the goddess in Tamil 282

Map I (distribution of myths and *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* 294

Map II (location of temples) 295

List of abbreviations - Aṅkāḷamman temples 296

List of informants 298

Aṅkāḷamman temples in Tamilnadu according to Census of India 301

Bibliography 308

Index 321

Photographs 330

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of books which deal with or contain information on South Indian 'village' deities. The earliest among them[1] have a special value thanks to their authors' concerns for detailed descriptions of important customs, forms of worship, etc., many of which have undergone changes or have since completely disappeared. Nevertheless, the tremendous volume of information assembled in these books, sometimes without much regard for synthesis and often at the expense of a kind of depth essential to modern researchers, tends to bewilder more than enlighten the reader. To know that there are hundreds of gods and goddesses whose shared features seem to outweigh any distinguishing factors does not do much to create a sound basis on which meaningful comparisons could be made. It has to be said to his credit that Elmore did try to bring some order into the colorful pantheon.

With regard to the 'village' deities of Tamilnadu a number of recent books and articles[2] have appeared, which go a long way in opening doors towards a deeper insight into the nature and function of these deities. Yet, much more should be known about these deities and their cult.

Studies such as the above show that folk religion is beginning to be recognized as an important component of Hinduism. An increasing number of Indologists cite in their works examples from the so-called 'little tradition'; many scholars find reflected in the local cults what they read in texts. Comparisons of the literary with the oral tradition can lead to new insights. The recognition of a continuous reciprocal influence upon each other of the local cults and the literary tradition in

[1] Ziegenbalg (1713), Oppert (1893), Thurston (1909 C&T), Elmore (1915), Whitehead (1921). Articles: Richards (1920), Hornell (1944), Aiyappan (1931).

[2] Only those dealing in particular with goddesses shall be mentioned here: Diehl (1956), Beck (1968;1969;1972;1981), Reiniche (1975;1979), Hiltebeitel (1982), Shulman (1980) - though not focussed on the 'village' goddess, contains much that elucidates her character, Shulman (1980 - East and West), Dumont (1957), Hudson (1982) and Brubaker (1978) - unfortunately I was not able to get a copy of this book in time to make use of it in my study.

Hinduism warrants also a more thorough treatment of the local cults. More studies dealing with folk religion are needed - before the older patterns of worship have totally disappeared and before the minor local deities have all become absorbed by the great gods of Hinduism -, and material based on present-day fieldwork ought to be made available, especially since in the past 50 years these local cults have undergone many changes.

What led to the present study of Aṅkāḷamman was the simple question: 'How do 'village' goddesses of Tamilnadu differ from each other?' To answer this question, one first of all needs to know who these goddesses are, where they are and how and by whom they are worshipped. At the time I decided to do my fieldwork in Tamilnadu, a detailed study which dealt with one particular goddess and encompassed the whole state had (to my knowledge) not yet been published. The need for such a study was demonstrated by the following considerations: are there unifying factors in the cult of a goddess throughout Tamilnadu, and if there are, what are they? If there are differences, are they based on locality? Are they due to the involvement of particular caste communities with the goddess? In other words, do these goddesses have a distinct character, expressed in the myths and rituals associated with them, which sets them apart from each other throughout Tamilnadu, or are they (and how much are they) colored by their geographic and social environment? Can some of these goddesses be substituted for each other (on grounds other than their identification with the universal Śakti or with either Śiva's or Viṣṇu's wife or wives), or are there clear boundaries between them?

These, I hoped, were more or less the questions which research, focussed on one particular deity in various places throughout Tamilnadu, would help answer. One such study is, of course, by no means enough; however, it may provide a background for further research in this direction. Why I chose Aṅkāḷamman for this study, I do not remember (maybe the choice was made by the goddess); in any case, Aṅkāḷamman had the advantage of being fairly well represented in all areas of Tamilnadu, yet of being much less popular than her sister, Māriyamman. Furthermore, Aṅkāḷamman is also worshipped in other states, (e.g., Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) which means that a study on Aṅkāḷamman could be extended

FIELDWORK

To present a flawless and complete picture of Aṅkāḷamman it would be necessary to visit all her temples in Tamilnadu. Aṅkāḷamman temples can be found in all districts of Tamilnadu. The distribution of the temples among the various districts varies considerably, the majority of them being in the Northern part of the state.

The samples in this study show that there are not only mythic and ritual variations on a theme, but also distinct changes *of* the theme, depending on which area we are dealing with (for example, the Tirunelveli core rituals do not follow the general pattern). Therefore, areas or temples which could not be included here may in fact conceal other new themes, or they may prove that a particular change found in only one temple of an area may exist also in other temples of that area (see Vīrapāṇṭi in the Salem district). The difficulties involved in travelling to some 140 temples spread throughout the state within one year are evident. Nevertheless, of the over 60 temples[1] surveyed, since 80 % followed the same pattern, one can with reasonable certainty assume that, were one to take into consideration all the temples, this percentage would not effectively change, especially as the samples were chosen from all districts in Tamilnadu.

The objective of the research could only be fulfilled by travelling to a fair number of villages and towns. The technical problems of such an endeavour were manifold. Though the Tamilnadu public transport system is excellent, by Indian standards, getting to some of the villages required many hours of bus travel, of waiting for buses (for example, where only one or two buses per day ply a certain route) and of walking a certain distance (if the village was not serviced by bus or train); that is, out of 12 hours 10 might be spent 'on the road' and only two on the actual 'work', the interview. Sometimes the problem was 'finding' a particular village; not all villages are on the maps I used.[2] A different sort of

[1] A few of the temples included in the study are not listed in the 1961 Census of India.

[2] Scale 1:250'000, prepared by the Army Map Service, Washington DC, 1954.

to these places. In fact I had hoped to include Andhra Pradesh in my research, but could, for reasons of time and financial resources, only survey a small corner of it.

Several authors mention Aṅkāḷamman in their works: Thurston (1909, p. 350 ff.; 1906, p. 220 ff.) contains in a nutshell the most important points about the goddess; Beck (1972, p. 99 ff.)[1] discusses the difference between Aṅkāḷamman and Māriyamman in terms of left- and right-hand castes and her D. Phil thesis (1968, p. 171 ff.) has a fairly detailed description of the Aṅkāḷamman festival in Kāṅkaya nāṭu; Elmore (1925, p. 18-19, p. 95 ff.) assembled material on Aṅkāḷamman in Andhra Pradesh; Whitehead (1976, esp. p. 126 ff.) mentions her several times and summarizes a particularly interesting purāṇa on Ammavaru whom he identifies with Aṅkamma; Oppert (1893, p. 485 ff.) talks about Aṅkāḷamman or Aṅgāramma in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Ziegenbalg (1869, p. 141 ff.) has a few details on her iconography; H.K. Shastri (1974, p. 223-224) lists her among other 'village' goddesses, and in Dumont (1957, at p. 391) we find some information about Aṅkāḷamman of Vālāntur.[2]

This present study is based on fieldwork undertaken in 1981-1982 in Tamilnadu (see below). The material was collected in roughly 60 temples (ca. 45 % of the total of Aṅkāḷamman temples listed in the 1961 Census).[3] The informants were usually the *pūcāri* (*pūjāri*) of the temples. The emphasis throughout the research was primarily on the ritual and mythic expressions of the goddess, and secondarily on the castes associated with her. Fairly early in the fieldwork it became clear that one ritual in particular was, so to speak, the 'trade-mark' of Aṅkāḷamman, and since the purpose of this study was to bring out the distinguishing features of Aṅkāḷamman, this ritual and its myths became the focal point of inquiries concerning the ritual expression.

This study shows that Aṅkāḷamman does have distinctive features which persist throughout the greater part of Tamilnadu. These features consist of a combination of ritual patterns and myths which undergo a

[1] I thank Prof. Beck for her offer to let me peruse her as yet unpublished (handwritten) material on Aṅkāḷamman. Unfortunately I could not make use of the offer as it was not possible for me to visit Vancouver.

[2] One should mention here also Subba Rao's discussion of 'The Ballad-cycle of Aṅkammā' from Andhra Pradesh (1972), p. 328 ff.

[3] Census of India (1961), Vol. IX, Madras.

variety of changes, sometimes independent of each other, but the variations thus produced always show some points of contact with the overall patterns. Many factors can be responsible for the changes, but the differences in caste communities associated with particular temples are only rarely and then indirectly involved. Apart from the characteristic traits which differentiate Aṅkāḷammaṉ from other goddesses, there are components in the picture of the goddess which bring her in line with other goddesses and place her at the left side of Śiva. This harmonizing side of Aṅkāḷammaṉ is especially evident at the verbal level (i.e., in the myths and songs). The devotee's perception of Aṅkāḷammaṉ is a complex whole, made up of fluid images superimposed on a nameless divine power. These images may be sharply delineated and marked by his knowledge about the goddess' myths, but they may also be forms created by his own personal feelings towards her; he sees her in her terrifying form (Ta. *akōra rūpam*; Skt. *ghora rūpa*) as the dancer in the cremation ground, but when she protects him, he thinks of her as mother (Ta. *tāy*).

The first chapter presents the goddess of the myths. In the first part are the myths themselves; in the second part the image of the goddess, her place and function on earth and the devotee's perception of the goddess on three distinct planes (as these are reflected in the myths) are discussed. The first section of the second chapter deals with the iconography of the goddess and of her '*avatāra*' and with other deities surrounding her. It also contains information on her temples. The second section explains which castes are associated with Aṅkāḷammaṉ. The third chapter, forming the major portion of this study, focuses on the yearly festival celebrated for Aṅkāḷammaṉ and, within that context, the discussion centres on the 'core' rituals, the rituals typical for Aṅkāḷammaṉ. Part a. is a description of the core rituals with their variations; in part b. the two myths most frequently offered as an explanation for these rituals are analyzed; in part c. an attempt is made to interpret the core rituals; while the last part, d., is about some of the other important rituals of the festival. In chapter four, the devotee speaks about his personal experiences of the goddess, and in the second part of this chapter the topic of possession is touched upon. The last chapter, five, gives the reader an idea about the type of songs on Aṅkāḷammaṉ which can be found in printed form. In the appendix can be found: two maps, the list of temples mentioned in this study, the list of informants, a compilation of Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples in Tamilnadu according to the 1961 Census of India, the bibliography, an index and photographs.

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[2] Scale 1:250'000, prepared by the Army Map Service, Washington DC, 1954.

problem revolved around lodging. Most small towns have at least one or two lodges, but it can happen that they are all booked up. Villages do not, of course, have any 'tourist' accommodation and should one have to spend the night in a village, one is entirely dependent on the villagers' hospitality. This happened a few times and without the villagers' great generosity and hospitality, it would have been impossible for me to watch the festival proceedings, which often took place late at night.

The persons from whom the data was collected were, with a few exceptions, the priests (*pūcāri*) of the respective temples. In the absence of the *pūcāri* (if he happened to be away from the village), I tried to gather the information from a person or persons closely associated with the temple, since, for obvious reasons, I could not count on returning to a particular village, especially if the village was not easily accessible. I visited a number of places on several occasions, either to collect additional information or to supplement the information I had already gathered by watching the actual festival procedure (to interview a *pūcāri* during the festival was often impossible, since his time was totally devoted to the festival proceedings). Most of the interviews (about 90 %) were taped. The approach I used in collecting the data changed during the course of the fieldwork. A questionnaire which I had initially used to guide the interview was soon abandoned. The questions tended to lead the informant in the direction I wanted him to go, rather than leaving him the freedom to express that which he considered of importance. Basically, I let the informant talk as much as he wanted and whichever way he wanted, no matter how erratic this was at times, and I asked the questions at the end. The disadvantages of this procedure were that one was liable to miss details which would have needed further elucidation, or that the informant would spend all his energy talking about things not directly relevant to the research and then would not feel very much like answering questions any more. If I would interrupt the speaker because he had arrived at a particularly important point and I would ask him to explain that point further, he would, after his explanation, lose the thread of his narrative, leave out parts, and continue somewhere else. Getting sequences right was always problematic, especially when two or three other people would give their comments and thus throw the speaker off his track.

Another problem was that some *pūcāri* did not know all the details of the rituals. This was the case when the *pūcāri* was relatively new to the temple or when he did not participate in certain parts of the ritual (some of the Pantāram did not participate in rituals involving blood sacrifices). In the latter case, sometimes other people would fill in the missing parts. Letting informants talk freely, rather than using the question/answer approach, had the advantage that I often obtained information which reflected the informants' personal feelings or thoughts about the goddess and also some of the problems they face in their role as *pūcāri*.

The purpose of this fieldwork was not to test any hypothesis; it was simply to collect enough data for a fairly comprehensive picture of the goddess Aṅkāḷamman and to provide new material which could be of service to those engaged in studies of a similar nature. Therefore, a major portion of what is presented here consists of informants' statements which take a variety of forms: myths, personal experiences, descriptions (of rituals, for example), views or ideas on a particular subject matter, etc. The totality of these statements revealed certain motifs or patterns, a similarity in the way informants perceived the goddess and their relationship to her and, while by no means all of these motifs could be treated in this study, I have tried to pick out some of the more relevant ones and to place them, where possible, into a larger context. In doing this, I have often limited myself to comparisons with material from Tamil sources and/or sources which could fall into the general category 'folk Hinduism'. Sometimes informants' statements did not furnish enough material to work out the possible concept behind certain ritual elements or ritual actions. Where this was the case, informants' statements had to be supplemented with material from other sources.

Since this study focuses primarily on the salient features of the goddess, it does not claim to cover all possible angles in the cult of Aṅkāḷamman. Similarly, not all topics discussed have received as extensive a treatment as their importance might have called for, but to have done so would have exceeded the scope of this study. In the light of their special claims on Aṅkāḷamman, the Cempaṭavar, for example, would have deserved a great deal more attention; however, this ommission may hopefully one day be rectified by a separate study.

What the following chapters hopefully reflect is the complexity of the goddess' image, a complexity which not only arises from the many associations the Hindu goddess has evoked in the minds of scholars, but a complexity which is intrinsic to the devotee's own perception of the goddess.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study could not have been done without the generous help of a great number of people. In connection with my research in Tamilnadu I wish to thank all the informants for their contributions. I owe special thanks to the people of Teḷi, in particular to Mr. Varatarājulu, *pūcāri*, Mr. Cuntaramūrtti, president, Mr. Rāmacantiraṉ and Mr. Maṇi, who did everything to make our stay in their village a rich and beautiful experience. I owe gratitude also to Mr. Aṅkappanāṭṭār of Vāḷācāpāṭ, Mr. Cauntararāja of Āṉaimalai, Mr. U. Pūṅkāvaṉam of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, Mr. Kurunātapiḷḷai of Maturai and Mr. Rājēntiraṉ of Tirucci (Pūkkuḷam) whose repeated help I very much appreciated.

During most of my trips to the villages and towns I was accompanied by Mr. Rollo Samuel of Maturai. His ability to establish a friendly relationship with people of different social standings and backgrounds and his good command of the English language made his assistance, in the collection and translation of the data, especially valuable. I am very grateful for the time and effort he voluntarily and readily dedicated to working with me. For his help in the translation of the songs I thank Dr. K. Paramasivam, American College, Maturai, and to Dr. Sarasvati Venugopal and Dr. Vijaya Venugopal, Maturai Kamaraj University, I would like to express my appreciation for their valuable suggestions. For their help in collecting data I also thank Mr. K. Muttuccāmi and Mr. J. Rajasekaran.

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My Canadian friend, Bruce Graham, read the English manuscript, and I am very thankful to him for pointing out unclarities and grammatical errors.

For my fieldwork in Tamilnadu I received financial support from the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. I am very thankful to the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for this junior fellowship (1981-82), as well as for previous fellowships, especially the language grant (1977-78). Without this Institute's financial help I would have found it very difficult to pursue my studies and research in India.

Lastly I wish to thank my mother for her continued moral and financial support.

Note on the use of Sanskrit and Tamil; transliteration; spelling of place names.

For the following reasons Tamil will be used for technical terms and Sanskrit for the names of deities.

Technical terms.

Whereas it may seem somewhat awkward to read Ta. *piracātam* for Skt. *prasāda*, the preference of the Tamil spelling for such terms can be justified on the following grounds: 1. Informants used invariably the Tamil pronunciation for technical terms of Sanskrit origin (i.e., *piracātam* for *prasāda*, *pūtam* for *bhūta*, etc.). 2. The citation of many words and expressions of either Tamil origin or of a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit in this study made it necessary to unify the spelling of all terms.

For all technical terms the Tamil spelling is used, however, Sanskrit equivalents are given (in brackets) when a term first appears in the text.

Names of deities.

As opposed to technical terms, Sanskrit names of deities were pronounced in a number of ways by informants. Thus 'Maheśvarī' could be 'Mayēśvari', 'Makēśvari', 'Mahēśvari', 'Mahēsvari', the proper Tamil spelling being 'Makēcuvari'. In most cases informants' pronunciation was closer to the Sanskrit than the Tamil. To write these names as they are pronounced by each informant would have produced a variety of different spellings confusing to the reader. Choosing the Tamil spelling would have presented a different problem: Tamil dictionaries offer various ways of spelling Sanskrit names. 'Lakṣmī' e.g., is Tamil 'Ilakkumi', 'Ilaṭcumi'; 'Īśvara' can be spelled 'Īcuraṉ', 'Īcuvaraṉ' or 'Īccuraṉ', sometimes 'Īsvaraṉ'. Furthermore, consistency would have called for such names as Rudra and Brahmā to be spelled 'Uruttiraṉ' and 'Piramaṉ'. Such spellings, although appropriate in a Tamil context, can cause unnecessary confusion when used in the larger context of Hinduism. Hence I have opted for the Sanskrit spelling of Sanskrit names except if the Tamil name varies considerably from the Sanskrit or if the context demands that the local character of a god be stressed (in which case the names will be in Tamil).

Tamil terms and names together with their Sanskrit equivalents will be found in the index.

Transliteration

Tamil words are transliterated according to the usage of the *Tamil Lexicon*.

Place names

The spelling of names of villages and towns is a transliteration of the Tamil names as they appear on road signs, festival notices or as they were pronounced by informants.

The names of districts are written in the anglicized fashion.

Abbreviations of place names denote the place at which the information was gathered. In most cases the informant will be the priest (*pūcāri; pūjāri*) of the Aṅkāḷamman temple of that particular place. A list of the abbreviations, the names of the places in Tamil and English and a list of the informants can be found in the appendix.

MW - Monier-Williams (Sanskrit-English Dictionary)
TL - Tamil Lexicon
Winsl. - Winslow's Tamil-English Dictionary

I. THE MYTHS

Introduction

It may seem somewhat 'unorthodox' to start a thesis with myths; however, the following reasons will justify such a procedure. The stories or myths, read as a whole, give a good portrait of the complex nature of the goddess called Aṅkāḷamman. She is not a goddess who can be easily described: wandering between heaven and earth, history and myth, changing her forms and names, she will not let herself be enclosed in pre-fashioned boxes. To understand the goddess, one has to be able to see her with the eyes of the devotee and to accept her on as many levels as the devotee wishes to place her. These levels are most clearly expressed in the myths. The myth is the stage on which the most diverse elements are allowed to interact. Here traditions mingle, here heaven and earth, good and evil meet, here god and man come face to face. The narrator does not think in terms of fact versus fiction, history versus myth, to him the history (Ta. *varalāṟu*) of the goddess is as 'real' as the goddess herself. Where we might separate a myth from a historical fact, he will join them, mix them into a space which gives him access to both the historical world and the mythical world. That is the space in which goddess and devotee meet. What the history of the goddess then shows us is how the devotee thinks, what his concepts of time and space are, how he perceives the goddess in general and in relation to himself in particular.

Secondly, the myths allow us to discover recurring patterns, images or themes which help to define the goddess; for example, her demand for food, or her image as a 'married' woman.

Thirdly, the myths, taken as a whole, show us which of the more common Hindu myths the narrator is familiar with and how he changes them, builds them into other myths.

Fourthly, the myths cannot be separated from the goddess. She lives as much in them as she lives in the temple and in the rituals. To leave them out would be depriving the goddess of an important sphere in which she acts.

Fifth and lastly, since myths, especially local variations, have become a worthy subject to be studied and analyzed, the corpus presented here may be of some use to those engaged in comparative studies of myths.

Two of the myths (No. 3 and 12) are important to the understanding of a certain ritual. Although they will be discussed in detail in the chapter on the festival, one version of each has purposely been included here in order to show how they are linked up with the other myths by the narrator. Not all the myths will be dealt with, for example, Renukā has already received much attention[1] and need not concern us further.

The myths presented here serve to familiarize the reader with the goddess. The discussion following them will deal in greater detail with the various levels on which the goddess is perceived by the devotee.

[1] O'Flaherty (1981), p. 236-37; 273. Cf. also Whitehead (1976), p. 116-117. Shulman (1980), p. 264 ff.

All the myths, with the exception of No. 3, were recorded in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr.[1] They were told by two informants on two different occasions. Each informant told certain myths at length while briefly mentioning others. The myths, as they appear below, are basically those told by informant (2), but for those myths he only mentioned in passing, I inserted the fuller versions given by informant (1). Myth No. 3 is known to both informants of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, but was not narrated in detail by either of them. Since this myth is of considerable importance in connection with the rituals discussed below, I have chosen to include here one of the more elaborate versions, the one narrated by the *pūcāri* of Teli. Both informants of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr are Cempaṭavar *pūcāri*. Informant (1) narrated the myths without accompaniment. Informant (2) sang them, while playing the *uṭukkai* (*damaru*). He was accompanied by the player of the *pampai* drum (see below) who also sang, repeating the last sentence of each portion after the main singer. The myths, i.e., the *varalāṟu* of the goddess, are sung at the time of the festival, usually by the player of the *pampai* (the *pampaikkāraṉ*).

The *pampai*.

The *pampai*, it was unanimously stressed by all informants, is the drum which has to be played for Aṅkāḷammaṉ. The drummers of the *pampai* (*pampaikkārar*) are usually hired for the period of the festival and often they come from a village some distance from where the respective festival takes place. The *pampaikkārar* often belong to the hunter (Vēṭar) or inland-fishermen (Cempaṭavar) castes. In Mēl Malaiyaṉūr and in the North/South Arcot districts, the *pampaikkārar* are generally Cempaṭavar, but they may be spread to other areas as well; for example, the *pampaikkārar* of Veṅkampūr is a Cempaṭavar. The *pampaikkārar* not only play the drum during the festival and sing the history of the goddess, but they also take an active part in the rituals; for example, they make the figure in the cremation ground, they throw the blood-rice into the air, they may walk over the hot coals, etc. (For instance, the *pampaikkārar* of Oṟṟaikkāḷmaṇṭapam, who belongs to the hunter caste, walks as the third person over the hot coals). The *pampai* is a 'double-drum', i.e., there are two drums, one on top of the other, and there are various stories

[1] The full name of the village is Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, but it is often simply referred to as Malaiyaṉūr.

told by the drummers of how the drum was made. The *pampaikkārar* (a Vēṭar) of Āṉaimalai, who claimed descent from the famous Kaṇṇappaṉ,[1] said that the *pampai* was made from the skin of an androgynous Asura whom the goddess had killed. The bottom drum is made of wood and is female, while the top drum is made of metal and is male. Each drum is said to have two eyes. A similar explanation was given by the drummer of Ōmalūr: Aṅkāḷamman gave birth to a son, whom she wanted to play the *pampai*. She told him to kill the two demons (*pūtam*, Skt. *bhūta*), one male, one female, who were guarding the fort of Vallāḷarājaṉ. This he did, and from their skin and sinews he fashioned a drum, the lower part of it he made from the female demon, the upper part from the male demon. Then he made the goddess promise that she would only dance to the *pampai*.[2] A different version comes from the Cempaṭavar *pampaikkārar* of Veṅkampūr, an interesting distinction being that the drummer is told not to enter the area of the sanctum.[3]

'There was a fisherman who had nothing in his hand. He was a fish-catching Cempaṭavar. Īśvarī cut a sandalwood and made a drum. Its sides she covered with the hide of a deer (*māṉ*). She took the intestines of the deer and made a rope from them, and then she hung the drum around the neck of the fisherman. She told him not to go inside the three *maṇṭapam* (Skt. *maṇḍapa*),[4] but to stay outside, beside the Nandin. Then she asked him what boon he wanted from her. He replied that he wanted to have never decreasing wealth. Then the goddess said: 'If I give you wealth, you will lose it fast. Do this duty (*kaṭamai*) for me, play the drum and I shall give you enough (food) each day.' And so it has been since.'

Two other versions make Vallālarājaṉ the material from which the *pampai* was made (Kunna., Mal.). According to some informants (Kilakul., Kilapa.), the *pampai* is the only instrument allowed to be played during the ritual in the cremation ground; however, in Vālācāpāt, for example, the *utukkai* was played as well. Usually the *pampaikkārar* will know

[1] Kaṇṇappaṉ tore out his eyes for Śiva. Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 135.

[2] The *pampaikkārar* of Nāttukkalpālaiyam told a similar story: The goddess herself made the *pampai* from the two spirits (*pēy*) who guarded the fort of Vallālarājaṉ and she gave the drum to them (hunters) because they were such good devotees of her.

[3] The *pampaikkārar* I saw playing for Aṅkālammaṉ stood right in front of her sanctum (e.g., Nattuk., Tri-P., Teli, Valpt.).

[4] an open hall connected with the temple.

and sing the *varalāṟu* of the goddess - the *pūcāris* in many cases would not know it in detail. The *pūcāri* of Teḷi seemed to be an exception, for it was he who sang the myths. He did this while the goddess went in procession around the streets and each time the procession stopped in front of a house, the *pampai* was played and the *pūcāri* sang a part of either the myth about Vallāḷarājaṉ or the myth of Śiva's brahminicide.

A. The history of the Goddess (Ta. *varalāṟu*).[1]

No. 1

In those days, when the two times seven worlds were all one as a lustrous substance in the shape of an egg, Umā Parameśvarī (Umai Paramēcuvari) took the form of an embryo in that egg and she was born in it with excellent gestures (*apinayam*, Skt. *abhinaya*). She was the one form, comprising the moveable and the immoveable things, the part and the whole.[2] The top shell became the upper portion of the universe, the lower shell of the egg, the lower part of the universe; the egg-white became the seven oceans, and the egg yolk was the Ammaṉ.[3] With the Ammaṉ were born: the eye on the forehead (*nerṟikkaṇ*), the trident (*tiricūlam*, Skt. *triśūla*), the gem (*maṇi*, Skt. *maṇi*), the mantra (*mantiram*) and the five faces (*pañcamukam*, Skt. *pañca mukha*).[4] She took the form of a snake, she who has a trident decorated with gems, she who was originally in the form of a woman, the primordial Śakti (Cakti). She took the form of a snake in order to create the world. At that time there existed no flower, no bush, nor any tree or vegetable; all the seven worlds were together and there were only seven oceans.

Then the world was shaking and in order to keep it from shaking, she created eight elephants[5] to support the world. Then she felt that it was not proper for her to be alone. She thought that she should have company and there appeared women in hundreds of crores. With her powers of magic she created these women, and she lived with them alone and spent one aeon (*yukam*, Skt. *yuga*). Where was it? It was in the original Kerala (Malaiyāḷam) that the Ādiśakti (Āticakti) took the form of Bhagavatī (Pakavati). In those days, when Maheśvarī (Makēcuvari) took the name of Bhagavatī and lived with crores and crores of women in Kerala, she had created these women without the four female qualities (*kuṇam*,

[1] On the spelling see separate note at the beginning.

[2] Ta. aṇṭapiṇṭam - the universe and the body; the latter is said to contain in embryo, or miniature, every thing found in the former. -Winsl.

[3] The most common term used for goddesses; i.e., mother.

[4] Usually *manimantirausatam*, i.e., 3 remedies for serpent's bites - snake stone, incantation and medicine (Winsl.) Cf. Zvelebil (1973), p. 32: "Sometimes it is said that the three basic methods of Siddha medicine are *maṇi*, *mantiram* and *maruntu*, that is, astrology, reciting *mantras*, and using drugs."

[5] the elephants governing the directions (*kikkiyāṉai*, Skt. *diś* and Ta. *yāṉai*).

Skt. *guṇa*), namely bashfulness (*nāṇam*), simplicity (*maṭam*), timidity (*accam*) and delicacy (or modesty - *payirppu*). Therefore, she thought that they were completely different from normal women, and she wanted them to have bashfulness etc... Who? The Ādiśakti who was ruling all over the universe, who was called Bhagavatī in the golden age (*maṇiyukam*).

She thought: 'It is not proper for things to go on like this,' and with her powers of magic (*maṇimantiram*) she created the Trimūrti (*Tirimūrtti, Mummūrtti*). These three gods pondered: 'Why has she created us?' and they realized that she wanted to become their wife. They felt that this was not right. Thinking: 'The one who created us is our mother,' the three gods worshipped her feet. When Maheśvarī saw the three gods fall at her feet, she realized that these wretched people would not be of any use to her and that they would not fulfil her desire. Getting angry, Nīlī opened the eye on her forehead and destroyed them. As she destroyed the three gods the crores and crores of women who were by her side were also turned to ashes.

When the gods and women had been turned to ashes, Īśvarī's (Īcuvari) mind withered and she started to think things which she had never thought before. She thought things over. She felt that it was not proper for her to be alone, so she took some part (flesh) of her body and the eyebrow on her forehead. She held them and thought of Kaṇṇaṉ (i.e., Kṛṣṇa), who is the master of deceitful plays, who is her elder brother, who knows all that has happened before and all that is going to happen in the future, who knows her thoughts, and she chanted mantras, wishing to meet Kaṇṇaṉ. He, Kaṇṇaṉ, appeared and asked: 'Oh woman, what is the reason you called me, oh sister, tell me. Oh sister Maheśvarī, I know what is on your mind. Even so, I do not want to do anything until I hear your own words.' 'Oh brother,' she said, 'thinking that I could have a husband, I created the Trimūrti; before you were born, I created the Trimūrti. Since they did not fulfil my wishes, I burned them with my forehead eye, and the women who had kept me company were also burned to ashes. Even now, I would like to have a husband,' she hinted.

Kaṇṇaṉ then brought the three heaps of ashes and told his sister to resurrect the Trimūrti. He asked her to start with the third heap, and out of it she began to create Brahmā (Piramaṉ), Viṣṇu and Rudra (Ruttiraṉ). The master of deceitful plays then made known to Rudra: 'My

sister wants to have you as husband. So, as soon as you get up, grab her hands and don't hesitate. Only if you take her hand will she be conquered.' This he conveyed through the language of the eyes of the gods.

Maheśvara (Makēcuvaraṉ), who understood this, took Pārvatī's (Pārvati) hands. At once she got the four qualities, namely, bashfulness, simplicity, timidity and delicacy. As she uttered the word 'wedding', Kaṇṇaṉ said: 'Oh excellent one, Maheśvarī, the things which you have are the eye on the forehead, the trident, the gem, the mantra and the five faces. If you give these five things to Maheśvara, everything will turn out as you wish.' As soon as she heard these words, and since she wanted to get married - she did not know deceit - she gave these five things to Maheśvara. The very moment she heard the word 'husband', trusting Kaṇṇaṉ and not knowing the nature of the five things, she gave them to Maheśvara. The deceitful one (Māyavaṉ) thought of the fact that this woman was his sister. 'Umā Maheśvarī is the one who created us, she is the older[1] sister, she should be considered as our mother, how can we take one who is our mother as our wife? We should burn her, we should belittle her, if her wishes are to be fulfilled.'

He said to his brother-in-law:[2] 'Oh brother-in-law, isn't the one who created us our mother? Oh Paramaśiva (Paramacivaṉ), listen to my words. If you think of this relationship of the creator, you should burn her.' Maheśvara thought: 'We received these five things because of this great fellow, we should listen to his words.' He opened his eyes, our lord opened his eyes - at that time, when Maheśvara opened the eye on his forehead, Maheśvarī was burned to ashes. Then Maheśvara looked at the ashes and said: 'Oh brother-in-law, you have destroyed a beautiful woman.' When he felt pity like this, he and Kaṇṇaṉ created the three women. Who are they? Icchāśakti, Kriyāśakti and Jñānaśakti, the three Śaktis.

Then they thought that they needed persons to create, maintain and destroy and therefore they created the Trimūrti: Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra. They created the three worlds: Kailāsa (Kailāyam), Vaikuṇṭha (Vaikuṇṭam) and Satyaloka (Cattiyalōkam); took the three Śaktis

1&2 In Tamilnadu Kṛṣṇa is usually thought of as the goddess' elder brother. Calling the goddes 'older' sister, may have to do with Kṛṣṇa's realization that she is their mother.

and went to stay there to rule. The eight elephants, which were supporting the earth, addressed the mother and said: 'Oh mother, we cannot support this earth any further.' Maheśvarī said: 'True indeed, you cannot support the earth any longer. The *kirētāyukam* (Skt. *kṛtayuga*) is over, the *tirētāyukam* (Skt. *tretāyuga*) is born.' She created the eight mountains, that Īśvarī. Then she made the eight mountains along with the eight elephants support the earth.

No. 2

When she was ruling the world like this, she had a suspicion, our mother, that Maheśvarī. She had a suspicion - what was it? There was the creator, the one who controlled, the one who fed the living beings (*paṭiyalattal*). 'You are performing these three things (i.e., creating, controlling and feeding the living beings). You are with me all the time, and yet you say that you feed every living being in the universe. Which living being have you fed, oh Īśvara, oh Cāmi[1]?' When Umā (Umai, Umaiyaval) asked Īśvara which living beings he had fed, he replied: 'Oh crazy woman! The number of living beings I feed is with me (i.e., known to me only). I will tell you, listen carefully.' He began to enumerate: 'From the elephant to the ant, I feed 84 hundred thousand crores of living beings. Not only that, I feed the frog (*tērai*) inside the stone[2] and the embryo in the egg. Oh Pārvatī, don't think that I am not feeding the 84 hundred thousand crores of living beings. I feed the frog, a living thing inside the rock, and the embryo inside the egg. Not knowing this, you suspected me, you wicked girl. I am the one who feeds even the embryo, so don't suspect me!' Īśvarī thought that that was fine, and they lived (peacefully) for some time.

One day the sage Nārada (Nāratar) couldn't find a quarrel and he thought of his grandmother, Pārvatī, and had the feeling that he might find a quarrel there - if she were there. Nārada came half walking half running to Kailāsa, thinking that he should start a quarrel involving his grandmother.

[1] *cāmi* - a contraction of *cuvāmi* (god, lord), a term used very often by devotees when they speak about a deity, regardless whether it is a female or male deity. (see below).

[2] a certain frog believed to live in stones.

He reached Kailāsa and saw Umā Parameśvarī sitting all alone at the entrance. Seeing her, he felt happy. Why? Because he had found a cause to start a quarrel. He began by praising her and asked: 'Grand-mother (*pāṭṭi*), why is it that you are sitting all alone? Where is my grandfather, Paraman̲ (Śiva)?' Umā, who did not know any deceit, fraud, falsehood and treachery, replied: 'Your grand-father has gone to the earth to feed the living beings. Oh Nārada, you know what your grand-father usually does. He has gone to measure out food.' 'Oh woman, you think that grand-father will return after feeding the living beings. He has not gone to feed the living beings, he has gone somewhere else. He smokes *gañjā*, he lies down and rolls in the cremation ground, he eats bones and ashes, he eats sacrifices, the food which you serve him being insufficient! You crazy woman, you think that he feeds the living beings!' Thus Nārada sowed the seeds of the quarrel.

These were times when Pārvatī had Saturn[1] in the tenth house. She had Saturn in the eighth house. She had Saturn in the third house. Since she had Saturn in all three houses, and since it was a bad time for her, she believed Nārada's words.

'If you wanted to find out if Paramaśiva truly fed living beings, what would you do?' 'What do you suggest, oh grand-son,' Pārvatī asked. He replied: 'I know what to do. Take a small golden box and place a small ant into it. Oh grand-mother, it's not easy to prove whether or not Maheśvara is feeding the living beings, it is not easy to prove a suspicion. For, if a snake circles your leg and you suspect that it might have bitten you, that suspicion itself will prove poisonous. But, if you suspect him, place a small ant into a golden box, and when Paramaśiva returns, he will tell you that he has fed all the living beings. At that time, you can ask him if he has fed this ant also. If he says yes, you can open the box and see what is in it. This is the best thing to do.' Thus Nārada suggested a trick. Umā, according to his words and according to his suggestion, placed a small ant into a golden box and tied that box into her sari's end. She thus safely stored it.

[1] Saturn (*ca̲ni*, Skt. *śani*) is generally considered inauspicious.

When Paramaśiva returned after having fed all living beings in proper order, Pārvatī was sitting with her legs stretched out. Women think it best to start a fight with legs stretched out! She was sitting like this, when Paramaśiva returned. He looked at her. 'Oh Pārvatā, all these days, as soon as you saw my head, you would take water in a pot and flowers and you would do a *pūcai* (*pūjā*) to my feet. Why are you sitting like this with your legs stretched out?' he asked. Maheśvarī said: 'Enough, enough, Oh Īśvara! You say that you feed 84 hundred thousand crores and crores of living beings; from elephant to ant, is it true or false? Oh excellent one, tell me.' Śiva, who does not know any fraud, deceit, falsehood, said that it was true. Then Umā called Nārada to settle the dispute. 'Your grand-father informs me that he feeds the 84 thousand crores of living beings. See whether he has fed the little ant I have here.' Saying this, she gave the box to Nārada. Nārada replied: 'It is not enough if only I have a look, you should see it and Paramaṉ (i.e., Śiva) should see it, all three of us should have a look. Let us check this little ant.'

The three felt that the suspicion could be removed if they opened the box and checked the ant. They opened the box and saw that there was a little ball of food in the ant's mouth. On seeing it, Maheśvara got angry. He knew that they had suspected him and had wanted to test him. He told Maheśvarī harshly: 'Oh you wicked one, you are always acting contrariwise, saying one thing and doing another. The ages of *kirētā*, *tirētā* and *tuvāpara* (dvāpara) have passed. Now it is *kaliyukam* (*kaliyuga*) and in this age you should be subjected to the human beings. Whatever disrespect they show you, however many offenses and frauds they commit, however many pollutions (*tīṭṭu*), even if they commit crores and crores of sins (*pāvam*), you go there and enjoy the fruits of their actions.' When he said that she should go to experience the fruits of their sins, Maheśvarī looked into Nārada's face and said: 'Oh Nārada, because I listened to your words, I will become a sinner.' Then she addressed her husband: 'Oh Īśvara, my lord, where will I go, where will I stay? You cursed me to be alone in this *kaliyukam*, where will I go and where will I stay' Paramaśiva replied: 'Once upon a time, Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ, a demon among kings, was ruling. You destroyed him, you took a fearful (*akōra*, Skt. *ghora*) form, you split open

the belly of Niśāsinī, you carried the embryo in a winnowing fan and you were in a great rage.'[1]

No. 3

Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ, Mōkaṉakaṇṭaṉ, Iruḷakaṇṭaṉ, Pūvalakaṇṭaṉ, four Rākṣasas (*rāṭcatar, arakkar*), born on earth (*pūlōkam*, Skt. *bhūloka*), were torturing the gods. Nāratamuṉivar (i.e., Nārada) was thinking of a way to destroy the Rākṣasas, and he went to see Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ and said: 'Since you are king of the whole earth, you should have the Trimūrti as your servants.' Then Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ asked: 'How could I bring the gods to work under me?' Go to see Kailāsamūrti (Kailāyamūrtti), practice austerities (*tavam*, Skt. *tapas*) and then ask for a boon (*varappiracātam*, Skt. *vara + prasāda*).' What kind of boon?' asked Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ. 'Ask Kailāsamūrti to be born to you as a son, since you don't have children. At the same time, ask that the Trimūrti, Viṣnu, Brahmā and Tēvēntiran (i.e., Indra!) shall be guards for your fort,' said Nāratamuṉivar.

Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ was very happy and he went to his palace and started to do *tavam*. Seated like an *āṇṭi*[2] he did *tavam*. Īśvara appeared to him and asked him why he was doing *tavam*. Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ said: 'Since I have no children, I want you to be born as my son and I want Mahāviṣṇu, Brahmā and Tēvēntiraṉ to be guards for my fort and to be my helpers.' When Īśvara heard this, he was very happy and said: 'I will grant you this boon.'

After Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ was given the boon, he caught the gods (*tēvar*, Skt. *deva*), tortured them, and placed them as guards (*kāval*) for his fort. Then Kailāsamūrti became a small child in the womb of Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's wife, Niśāsinī. At that moment, darkness descended on the two times seven worlds. When Nāratamuṉivar saw this, he thought: 'Only when Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ is destroyed, can the gods be released,' and he ran to Kailāsamūrti's wife, Īśvarī, and said: 'Ammā, Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ has captured the gods and keeps them as his servants. You should go and destroy him.' Umā asked: 'How can I destroy him?'

[1] A very short version of this 'ant' myth opens the *Kāttavarāyaṉ katai*.

[2] *āṇṭi* - a 'non-brāhman śaiva mendicant, usu. dressed in yellow cloth' (TL).

He said: 'Dress yourself as gypsy (*kuṟatti*) and go to Vallāḷakaṇ-ṭaṉ's country to tell fortune. Tell Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ that he is going to have a child, that his fort will be destroyed, that all his people will die and that his (Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's) head will be cut off. When you say this, he will imprison you. Then you come out of the prison and take on your all-containing form (*vicuvarūpam*, Skt. *viśvarūpa*). At that time, when you come out of the prison, Īśvara, in Niśāsinī's womb, will be ten months old.[1] The queen will have her labour pains. Then you make sure that there is no midwife (*maruttuvacci*) anywhere in the world. You yourself change into a midwife and sit under a banyan tree. Vallāḷakaṇ-ṭaṉ, seeing his wife suffer, will send his ministers out over the world in search of a midwife. The ministers will march all over the world, but they will not find a midwife. Finally, being tired, they will sit under the same tree under which you are sitting.

'Then you have to ask them: 'From which village, from which country are you; where are you going?' They will answer: 'We are from the kingdom of Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ, our queen has labour pains, therefore our king has ordered us to find a midwife. We have gone around the world in search of a midwife, but we could not find one, and therefore we are seated here, worried, wondering what we should say to our king.' Then you will give them the promise that you will help them and at once you will create your son Vīrabhadra (Vīrapattiraṉ) through your *tavam* and make him into a small child. Then the ministers will bring a palanquin and on this they will carry you to the king's house. But you should stay outside the fort and ask the king for the following: sixty yards of screen (*tiraiccīlai*), a bunch of Nim leaves (*vēmpu*), a small vessel (*kiṉṉi*), a big knife (*aruvāḷ*) and a winnowing fan (*muṟam*). The king will give you these things. Then you call for his wife. Outside the fort, you place the screen and lay her on it, facing the sky. Then you take your *vicuvarūpam*, tear open the queen's belly, take out the child and put it in the winnowing fan. Then you take the intestines and wear them as garlands. Afterwards you meditate (*tiyāṉikka*), then all the Kāṭṭēṟi[2] will come and you will give them the blood as sacrifice.

[1] In Tamil, one says a woman is ten months pregnant, not nine months.

[2] Kāṭṭēṟi - a goddess, here: blood-thirsty spirits.

You will ask Vīrabhadra to cut off the head of Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ and to hold it in his hand. You will ask him to destroy the fort and everything around it and to kill the four Kaṇṭaṉ.'

Having heard this, Umā took the form of a fortune-teller and went to Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's kingdom to tell fortune. She said: 'Any king or layman can ask me their fortune and whatever I will say will turn out in truth.' When Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ saw her, he asked her where she was from. 'Cāmi, I am from Kailaṅkiri (i.e., Kailāsa), we are fortune-tellers (*kuṟicollum kuṟavar*),' she said. He asked: 'Do you know what child will be born to me?' 'You will have a son, Kailāsamūrti; he is in Niśāsinī's womb. Your head will be cut off and your fort and all will be destroyed. The four Rākṣasas will be ruined.' When she said this, the king threw her into prison, but she took another embodiment (*avatāram*, Skt. *avatāra*), left the prison and went to Kailāsa.

Now Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's wife was ten months pregnant. She had her labour pains. The king called his ministers and sent them throughout the world to find a midwife. The Ammaṉ, as an old woman, sat with Vīrabhadra under the banyan tree. When the ministers arrived, she asked them what they were doing here, and they explained the whole story to her. Then the Ammaṉ said: 'I am a midwife, I'll help.' The ministers brought her on a palanquin to Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's town. Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ said to her: 'See to it that my wife has a safe delivery.' She said: 'I will.' Then the king asked her what she needed and she told him to bring Nīm leaves, a winnowing fan, a vessel, a knife and a sixty yard long screen. Then the Ammaṉ placed the screen on the northern side of the fort, laid the queen on it, tore open her belly, took out the intestines and garlanded herself with them. She took out the child and placed it into the winnowing fan and gave the blood to the Kāṭṭēṟi. When Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ came running, he saw his fort and everything fall down and he felt very sad. Then Vīrabhadra, in his *vicuvarūpam*, took the sword in his hand and cut off the head of the king. He held the head in his hand, and then he killed the other three Rākṣasas. He destroyed the entire city. Then Vīrabhadra and the Ammaṉ released the gods and sent them to their home. They sent Īśvara back to Kailāsa and made him again measure out the food.

Śiva continued: 'When you were so angry at that time (i.e., when you destroyed Vallālakantaṉ), Kaṇṇaṉ saw your form and he was afraid that the whole world would be destroyed, if you, Maheśvarī, were to stay in this form. Therefore Kaṇṇaṉ dug up a deep pit for you, and when you fell into that pit, he covered it with a rock. That was your elder brother! Go there, Pārvatā, go near that rock and live as a termite hill (*puṟṟu*) and you will attain name and fame. But even when you are there as a termite hill, the curse which I gave you previously will not be removed. When did I give that curse? When you were born as Reṇukā and did unworthy deeds.'

No. 4

'At that time I was born as Jamadagni and you as Reṇukā.... Every day Reṇukā (Irēṇukai) brought water to Jamadagni (Camatakkiṉi-muṉivar) for his *pūcai*. One day, the Ammaṉ (Reṇukā) went as usual to the tank to scoop up water. At that moment, a Gandharva by name Kāttavīriyārjuṉaṉ[1] flew by above. As she collected the water and looked at the fish, she saw the Gandharva and thought: 'How is it possible that such a beautiful person could have been created.' At that moment she lost her chastity (*kaṟpu*). Jamadagni knew by means of the eye on his forehead that Reṇukā had lost her faithfulness, and he decided not to let this pass unpunished. He called his sons, Kāttava-rāyaṉ, Kaṟuppaṇacāmi[2] and Paraśurāma (Paracurāmar). These were the three sons born to Ammaṉ, Śakti, Reṇukā. When Reṇukā was not able to scoop up the water,[3] she cried: 'Oh my god, I have lost my chastity.'

Jamadagni asked his two sons, Kāttavarāyaṉ and Kaṟuppaṇacāmi: 'What should be done with a woman who has lost her chastity?' They answered: 'Her head should be cut off.' 'It is your mother who has lost her chastity, so go and cut off her head and bring it to me.' 'Father, how can you ask us to cut off the head of our mother, we cannot do this!' 'You say that you cannot cut off your mother's head? So be it, you shall be transformed into jungle men (*kāṭṭumaṉitar*)!' Thus Jamadagni cursed them.

[1] Also Kāttavīriyaṉ, cf. Kāñcip. (1910), *Irēṇukīccarappaṭalam*, p. 173, and Dessigane (1964), p. 60-61.

[2] Also spelled Kaṟupaṇṇacāmi.

[3] Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 264 ff. Reṇukā was able to 'carry water in a ball without any container.'

When Paraśurāma came back from his studies at school, his father asked him: 'What should be done with a woman who has lost her chastity?' 'One should cut off her head,' Paraśurāma replied. 'It is your mother!' 'My mother? Alright then, give me the big knife, I shall go and cut off her head,' said Paraśurāma. As he took the knife, he asked his father for three boons, which his father granted.

Paraśurāma went towards his mother. Reṇukā thought: 'What - no, he will not let me get off. He will certainly cut off my head. I should not stay here.' She ran away, but Paraśurāma ran after her. They ran and ran and finally Reṇukā escaped into the house of a Cakkilicci[1] who had just reached puberty. Paraśurāma also ran inside and, thinking that he was cutting off the head of his mother, he cut off the head of the Cakkilicci woman - it was dark inside the hut. Then his mother ran out of the house, and Paraśurāma ran after her and cut off her head.

Then he picked up his mother's head and brought it to his father. His father said: 'You are indeed my son. What are the three boons which you had asked for?' 'The first is to bring my brothers back to their original form.' 'Okay, I will give you this boon.''The second is to bring my mother back to life.' Jamadagni gave him this boon as well. 'The third is - you had said that my mother had lost her chastity while she looked at a fish - give me the boon that she, in fact, did not lose her faithfulness.' Jamadagni brought the brothers back to their original form. Then he said to Paraśurāma: 'Take this water, place your mother's head onto her body and sprinkle this water over it - she will then come back to life.' But Paraśurāma put the head of his mother by mistake onto the body of the Cakkilicci woman and sprinkled the water over it. When his mother got up, she saw that she did not have her own body. She lamented: 'Appā,[2] my body has changed. From now on I cannot come (to you) anymore. What can I do?' When all the gods saw this, they said: 'Ammā, you have been born here, it has happened like this, and so from now on you are Māriyammaṉ, Karumāri, Urumāri, Taṇṭumāri, Kollamāri,[3] you shall be Māriyāttāḷ.'

[1] Woman of the Cakkili caste; a caste of shoemakers or leather-workers.

[2] Interjection. (Literally 'Oh father!')

[3] Karumāri is in Tiruvēṟkāṭu, Taṇṭumāri in Mylapore, the other two are unkown to me.

No. 5

'What will I eat then?' she asked. The gods said: 'You will put the pox pearl (*muttu*) on people on earth and when you have given them the pox, they will offer you *pūcai*.' Then what did the Amman do? 'It is because my body has changed that they call me Māriyāttāḷ,[1] fine, let it be so, but first of all, I will not let Paraman (Śiva) get off free, even though he is a man,' she said and went straightaway to Paraman. She placed ten pox pearls on him. As soon as she had put them on him, Paraman began to suffer. 'Ammā, what is this, why are you doing this?' he asked. 'What can I do, I placed ten pearls on you; you just have to accept them,' she said. Paraman pleaded: 'Tell me a way to take them off.' The Amman said a mantra and took off the pearls. In return she asked him to give her his milk cow. When she had received the milk cow, she returned.

Then she placed eight pearls on Yama (Eman). 'Only if you give me the vehicle on which you ride, will I make you well,' she told him. After she had received the buffalo from Yama, she decided to go to Mahāviṣṇu. 'Even if he is my brother, I should not leave him out.' Mahāviṣṇu saw her coming and said to his wife Laksmī (Laṭcumi): 'Pennē,[2] what can I do? My sister is coming. She will not leave me out. She has been placing these pearls on everyone, so she will surely also come here. I shall lie down, pretending that I have a fever and a headache. Please shut the door.' Laksmī said: 'Okay, Cāmi, I shall do as you say.' Mahāviṣṇu lay there with fever and a headache and complained.

Amman arrived, shouting Annē, Annē.[3] Laksmī said to her: 'Your brother is sick with a headache and fever. What shall I do?' What did the Amman do then? 'Hey brother, it's not just a fever and a headache that you have. You shall also have *pitta* and *vāta* fever,[4] all three fevers you will have,' she cursed him. Right away Mahāviṣṇu got real fever. He shouted: 'Ammā, I cannot bear it.' 'Right,' she said, and threw three pearls on Mahāviṣṇu through the door. He said: 'Laksmī, Pennē, you have

[1] A folk etymology derived from *māṟu* - 'to change'.

[2] Vocative of *pen* - 'woman'. Cf. Beck (1981), p. 126 for a variant: Reṇukā receives, by the same process, the gods' weapons and from Yama the 'right to kill some people on earth with her pearls of smallpox.'

[3] Voc. of *annaṉ* - 'elder brother'.

[4] *pitta curam* - 'bilious fever', *vāta curam* - 'fever from flatulent or acid humour'.(Winsl.)

to save me. Open the door for her.' The Amman said: 'What is this, brother?' He said: 'Ammā, why are you playing with me like this? What shall I do?' Laksmī joined in: 'Anni (sister-in-law), give me back my husband (i.e., cure him).' The Amman said: 'Will you give me what I ask of you? Only then will I bring down your fever and cure you.' 'What do you want, sister?' 'I want a he-goat as big as a palmyra tree and a *māvilakku* (a lamp made of rice-flour dough) as big as Tiruvannāmalai[1] and a huge pot full of gruel (*kūl*). If you place these things before me, I shall cure you.' As soon as Laksmī had said that she would do as asked, Amman cured Mahāvisnu and left. She said: 'I shall come back on Tuesday.'[2] 'I am lucky,' she thought and she was very happy, knowing she would get a goat as big as a palmyra tree, a *māvilakku* as big as the mountain and a huge pot full of gruel.

Mahāvisnu, in the meantime, said to Laksmī: 'Pennē, *you* have the ability to offer such big things, but people cannot give such things. You would be able to offer her a goat even bigger than a palmyra tree. What is a *māvilakku* as big as Tiruvannāmalai, you could give her one even bigger than that.' Laksmī asked: 'What shall I do, Cāmi?' 'Go and see if you can find a new-born goat, take it and place it on top of the palmyra tree. Then take a small *māvilakku* and place it on top of Tiruvannāmalai. In a coconut shell, make some gruel and place it in the middle of the entrance.'

As soon as Laksmī had done this, Amman arrived. She said: 'Oh brother, where is the gruel for me?' 'Look, there, there is the coconut shell full of it.' She got angry. 'Okay, and where is the goat?' 'Look up there, on top of the palmyra tree, it is shouting.' 'Brother, where is the *māvilakku*?' 'There, look, on top of the Tiruvannāmalai mountain it is burning. You asked for a size as big as a mountain, there it is burning on top of the mountain.' Amman became furious. 'What is this test?' 'Ammā, look, we gods can give huge offerings, but the people cannot do this. Such is the law (or the curse). Go to a place where the Vannār (washermen) are. They will give you pure gruel which you can eat and which will make you happy. You can place the pearls on people. Afterwards you cure them, and they will bring you gruel, so that you can eat and live.'[3]

[1] The *'māvilakku'* burning on top of the Arunācala mountain is the *kārttikai tīpam* (Skt. *kārttika dīpa*).

[2] The day on which such things should be offered to her.

[3] On Māriyamman see also Sontheimer (1981), p. 110 ff. The pox pustules are often compared to eyes. Māriyamman is called the 'one with 1000 eyes', and devotees will carry special pots which have 1000 holes (i.e., 'eyes') to her temple during the festival.

After the Amman̲ had heard what Īśvara told her, she accepted his curse and she came, all alone, looking for that sign, the rock.

No. 6

She was the Ādiśakti, and when she came, it was the time of dusk, and she wanted to perform a *pūcai*. She found that there was nobody nearby. She created a son to be near her. He was Pāvāṭairāyan̲, who served her as an attendant. Not only that, she also called Subrahmaṇya (Cuppiramaṇiyan̲), who is worshipped by people all over the world. He came running and asked her why she had called him. There was an understanding between them that he would come to her at any moment she thought of him. 'Whenever you think of me, whenever you are in danger, I will come. You have nine children, apart from the crores of people in this world. You begot three sons in each of the three ages (*kirētā, tirētā, tuvāpara*), these are your adopted sons. You don't have any begotten sons. I shall come whenever you call me in times of danger,' Subrahmaṇya, who had given his word like this, said. She called Subrahmaṇya while she was in a town called Avalūr.[1] There she completed her evening worship and continued her journey. She did not know what to do.

She stayed for a short while on the borders of Tāyaṇūr. She needed a place to stay. She called Pāvāṭairāyan̲, Vīrabhadra, Subrahmaṇya and Vināyaka (Vināyakar), her four children and said: 'I have to spend the night here, I need a place, loved ones.' The four of them said 'okay' and created a beautiful platform. She stayed on that platform in Tāyaṇūr. Thus she spent the night in Tāyaṇūr.

As she was continuing her journey, she wanted to take a short-cut through the fields. She entered the paddy fields and started walking. The four sons led the way and Umā Maheśvarī followed. Maheśvarī, who was like a creeper,[2] walked slowly, wading through breast-deep paddy fields, through shoulder-deep paddy fields. As she was thus walking, her sons showing her the way, she did not realize that her toe-ring had become loose. When Maheśvarī noticed the ring missing, she lamented: 'Oh lord,

[1] Avalūr(pēṭṭai) lies about 10 km west of Mēl Malaiyaṇūr, Tāyaṇūr lies between these two villages, about 2 km west of Mēl Malaiyaṇūr.

[2] a common simile - *valli* or *vaḷḷi*.

women of the world should not walk about without the three jewels, for if they do, they might be called prostitutes. This being so, and my toe-ring missing, what will I do?' She stood immobile like a tree.

The four sons, the heroes of heroes, realized that Maheśvarī had stopped walking. They asked her: 'Oh mother, why is there grief on your face, please tell us.' She replied: 'Dear ones, I don't know how I lost my toe-ring. When I realized that I had lost it, I searched for it, but could not find it.' The four sons, heroes of heroes, at once destroyed the paddy field. But even though they had destroyed a great portion of it, they could not find the ring. Umā saw this. The sun was about to set, and they had searched a whole day for the ring, but had not found it. What did Maheśvarī do? She chanted a mantra, scooped up a ball of mud the size of a mustard seed and cast a spell on it. While doing this, she cursed all the paddy fields to be burned. She scooped up a ball of mud the size of a lime and cast a spell on it. As she sprinkled the mud, the fields turned to ashes. Then she bent down and looked for the ring. She found the ring under her feet. She was happy; right away she wore it again.

The four sons asked her now: 'You said that women should not walk about without the toe-ring, but you mentioned three things; what are they, tell us.' Umā replied: 'If a beautiful woman, who lives with her husband, does not have the three jewels, you know who would befriend her: Mūdevī (Mūtēvi)[1] will reside in her face. The three things are: the woman should not be without a *poṭṭu*[2] on her forehead, without a toe-ring and without the bangles on her arm.[3] If she is without these three, Mūdevī will reside in her. If a dog sees such a woman, it will bark. Do you know why the dog barks? The dog is a faithful animal. Īśvarī was once born as a dog. The dog is the only creature that knows whether a man is doing good or bad.'

The sons said: 'It is dark now, we should not be travelling now.' She agreed,and they returned to Tāyaṉūr. As they were returning, the sons asked her: 'You stayed in Kāśī as Viśālākṣī (Vicālāṭci), you stayed in

[1]She is the elder sister of Lakṣmī and considered to be the goddess of ill-luck, misery or deformity.

[2]The round mark on the forehead, the *tilak*.

[3]She does not mention the wedding chain (*tāli, maṅkaliyam*). Maybe she takes it for granted that no married woman would ever be without it.

Kāñci and produced the form of Kāmākṣī (Kāmāṭci), and when you stayed in Vāl̲apantal, you produced the Paccai form, thus you have left a trace in every place you stayed. Which trace did you leave in Tāyan̲ūr?'

No. 7

At the time when Īśvara, because of a curse, had to go around the world begging,[1] the Amman̲ asked her brother (Viṣṇu) for advice. Her brother said: 'Sister, go to Kāñcimānakar, practice austerities (*tavam*) there. He (Śiva) will come there and give you the left side. Go there.' Amman̲ left and went to Kāñcinakar. In Kāñcinakar, at the Kampai river, she formed a *liṅkam* (*liṅga*) with sand and then did *tavam*.

At that time Īśvara said to Gaṅgā (Kaṅkai) - (a long time ago, when Īśvarī had given the eye of the forehead to Īśvara, she had placed a vessel full of water on top of Īśvara's head to cool down the heat produced in him due to the third eye. The water on the head of Īśvara cooled him down, and then the water took the shape of a girl, Gaṅgā) - he said to Gaṅgā: 'Penṇē, my consort, your rival (*cakkaḷatti*) is doing *tavam* in Kāñcinakar, go there and disturb her, then I shall give you, Gaṅgā, my left side.'

Gaṅgā arrived as the two times seven oceans joined with a lot of noise. When the water was flooding everything, what did the Amman̲ do? She was practicing *tavam* by the river, and as she saw the flood, she cried out: 'Aṇṇē, what misfortune is now happening to me?' Mahāviṣṇu appeared. He said to Gaṅgā: 'Sister, I am your brother, don't do this, don't destroy her *tavam*.' Gaṅgā replied: 'Until I came of age, I listened to my parents and to my brother. Now I only listen to my husband.' She did not listen to her brother and advanced as a big flood. Mahāviṣṇu lay across Gaṅgā's path. He lay down by the side of the *liṅkam*. The flood knocked against Mahāviṣṇu and jumped over him. The sand from the flood got washed onto Mahāviṣṇu and the water flowed off, without having damaged the *liṅkam*.

Amman̲ got up and looked for her brother. Mahāviṣṇu was not there. She started to dig up the sand which had been washed onto Mahāviṣṇu.

[1] See below, No. 12.

His body had become black, jet black, and the Ammaṉ said: 'Why should this bad thing happen to you, brother.' He said: 'Sister, now that my body has become so black, they will not accept me any longer in Vaikuṇṭha. When I go to Vaikuṇṭha, Lakṣmī won't accept me, because I have a black body. In Kāñci you will be Kāmākṣī and I will be Karivaratar.[1] We will stay there together, in Kāñci.'

Then the Ammaṉ left Kāñci and went to Vāḷanakar,[2] where she settled in her green (*paccai*) form. And this is how it happened:

No. 8

There were six robbers: Kaḷḷar, Maṟavar, Vampar, Ṭompar.[3] They were in the forest, a forest with tigers, lions and bears. They saw the Ammaṉ coming on the way. As they saw her, they shouted: 'Hey, you there, hey, crazy one who is going there, who are you, walking all alone? Stop!' The Ammaṉ stopped. Then one of the six robbers said to the others: 'This woman seems somewhat strange, like some powerful being. It's better you don't say anything to her. Don't stop her. Some evil will befall us!' The Ammaṉ thought: 'These are robbers and I should not be here alone,' and she created Vīrabhadra. Then she said to the robbers: 'You told me to stop; you called me a *pāvi*.[4] You are asking me who I am.' The robbers then said: 'Now first take off all your clothes and ornaments.' The Ammaṉ removed all her clothes and ornaments and handed them to the robbers. Then she walked on.

As the Ammaṉ was walking, the robbers saw her wedding necklace (*tirumaṅkaliyam*) glistening. The robbers shouted: 'Hey you, stop!' Then one of the robbers said to the others: 'Don't do this, don't stop her. Something bad will happen. She will curse us; she is like a mother.' However, none of the other robbers listened to him. They asked her to give them her wedding necklace. As soon as her hand went to her neck to take off the

[1] Viṣṇu as Varatarājaswāmi in Kāñci saved Brahmā's sacrifice by laying across the path of the flood caused by Sarasvatī, who herself, in the form of the river, tried to destroy the sacrifice. Cf. Das, R.K. (1964), p. 218. Also Kāñcip. (1910), p. 257, Dessigane (1964), p. 90; Shulman (1980), p. 172 ff., p. 272. The blackness (*kari*) of Viṣṇu is here associated with a lowering of his status.

[2] i.e., Vāḷapantal. A town of this name lies ca. 10 km east of Arni.

[3] Kaḷḷar, Maṟavar (Tēvar) - see section B, 'castes'. Vampar - 'worthless person' (TL); Ṭompar - 'a wandering tribe of singers and rope-dancers' (TL), cf. Thurston (1909 C&T): 'Dōmb', 'Dommara' (?).

[4] *pāvi* - 'sinner' - one who should be pitied.

necklace, her son got very angry and said: 'Mother, what are you doing - giving your *maṅkaliyam* to them!' She replied: 'Just wait son, I shall not give them the necklace,' and turning to the robbers she said: 'You robbers, since you are asking me to hand over my *maṅkaliyam*, I curse you to become the *cavvātu* mountains.'[1] Then the robbers cried: 'When will we be reborn (i.e., regain human form)?' They cried and prayed. The Amman̲ said: 'In Pālanakar which is also called Vāl̲apantal, I will do *tavam* under a new *pantal*.[2] At that time, I shall need some water for the *pūcai*. Then I shall make sure that there is no water in the seven worlds. I shall send out my son, and he will throw his spear (*vēl*). You will get rid of the curse, when the *vēl* pierces the mountains.'

Amman̲ went to do *tavam* under a new *pantal*. At that time, Īśvara said to Gaṅgā: 'Gaṅgā, your co-wife is doing *tavam* there. See to it that there will not be any water in the two times seven worlds and in the seven oceans. There should be no water for her *pūcai*.' Wherever one looked, there was no water. Since the Amman̲ could not find any water anywhere, she created a son, Murukan̲. - In the Kantapurāṇam Murukan̲ was created from the six sparks which emanated from Śiva's (Civan̲) eye, but in this purāṇam the Amman̲ herself created Murukan̲. - She created him out of her matted hair (*caṭai*, Skt. *jaṭā*), her hair which reached from the far north to the southern Kailāsa. Thinking of this, her hair, she created him. Murukan̲ said: 'Mother, why did you call me?' She replied: 'Son, I don't have water, go and fetch some water for me.' Then the Amman̲ from the power (*cakti*, Skt. *śakti*) of her body produced a spear and gave it to Murukan̲. She gave him the *vēl* and told him to go.

Murukan̲ mounted his peacock. He went through the two times seven worlds and the seven oceans, but he could not find any water. Finally he came to the *cavvātu* mountains. He was very tired and calling out the Amman̲'s name, he thrust his *vēl* into the mountain.[3] As he thrust his spear, there flowed from the mountains the six robbers, red blood that rose up to a flood.

[1] Javādi hills - a mountain range belonging to the Eastern Ghats, running along the western side of Vellor and Tiruvannamalai.

[2] a temporary covering or booth, usually made of thatch.

[3] Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 43. A local variant connects this episode with the goddess' *tavam* in Kāñci. Murukan̲ is said to have split the *cavvātu* mountains with his spear, thus releasing the water of the Ceyyār river, which the goddess used for her *pūcai*.

Murukaṉ fell at his mother's feet and said: 'What is this, mother, blood is flowing from the mountain.' Ammaṉ said: 'It is not like this - I cursed six men; just look, they will be coming.' And these six men, the robbers, came. They fell at her feet, saying: 'Ammā, now we have found release (*vimōcaṉam*, Skt. *vimocana*).'

Then the Ammaṉ said: 'Even here I did not obtain the left side (of Śiva). I cannot be alone, therefore, you robbers be my guards. I shall be sitting here as Paccaiyammaṉ in this *pantal*.' Then the Ammaṉ gave the six robbers the names *vāḻvumuṉi*, *karumuṉi*, *lāṭamuṉi*, *cemmuṉi*, *rattamuṉi* and *iḷaiyamuṉi*[1] and asked them to be her guards.

The Ammaṉ called her brother Mahāviṣṇu and asked: 'Will there be any danger for me to have these six men as my guards?' Mahāviṣṇu said to his wife, Lakṣmī: 'There should not be any danger to my sister, therefore, prepare some *vaṭai*.'[2] Mahāviṣṇu then packed the *vaṭai* in a bundle, put the bundle on his head and went to see the Ammaṉ. Mahāviṣṇu arrived there in the form of a giant. The six robbers, when they saw him, said: 'What's this, look at this huge fellow, he is so huge and we are only like this (i.e., small). Look, this big fellow is coming to see the Ammaṉ. Let's go and find out why he has come.' They asked him: 'Who are you, why have you come, where are you going?' Mahāviṣṇu replied: 'I am going to worship the Ammaṉ, and I am going to work for her.' Then the robbers said: 'If such a great person is going to work for the Ammaṉ, then we should fear and respect her as well.' And they were awed by her. Mahāviṣṇu placed the *vaṭai* at the Ammaṉ's feet and bowed to her. The Ammaṉ inquired: 'Brother, why have you come?' Mahāviṣṇu explained: 'These robbers would have killed you, that is why I have come.' Thereupon the Amman said: 'So you, brother, in addition to these six men, also sit here as a guard for me.' She made him sit beside her as the seventh Munīśvara (Munīcuvarar) - he is the one who has the *nāmam* (i.e., the vertical marking of Vaiṣṇavas) on his forehead and who wears a garland of *vaṭai* around his neck. His name is Vaṭaimālaimuṉīcuvarar.[3]

[1] *vāḻvu* - 'prosperity, life', *karu* - 'black', *lāṭa* (*ilāṭam*) - 'name of a country, prob. modern Gujarat' (TL), *cem-* - 'red', *ratta-* - 'blood', *iḷaiya-* - 'young'.

[2] a small spicy cake fried in oil.

[3] i.e., the god with the *vaṭai* garland. This myth corroborates on many accounts what Shulman says in his article on Tirumullaivāyil (*East and West*, 1980); in fact, one wonders if Paccaiyammaṉ is not indeed Paccaimalaiyammaṉ.

As Paccaiyamman at Vāḷapantal the Amman thought: 'I should not be here, what am I supposed to do?' Mahāviṣnu said: 'There is a saying:

kuntināl kuttanūr, kutikontāl malaiyanūr
taṅkināl tāyanūr, tarittuninrāl malaiyanūr

she squatted in Kuttanūr, she took possession of Malaiyanūr
she stayed in Tāyanūr, she remained in Malaiyanūr.

If you go to Kuttanūr, you will obtain the left side of Śiva.' The Amman went to Kuttanūr and sat down there, but even there she could not get the left side. In Kuttanūr she stayed as Kuṅkimahirēcuvari.[1] She left that place and went to Kailāsa. She complained to her brother: 'What a fate I have! I still do not have the left side of Śiva.' He replied: 'Go to the place where the shadow of Tiruvannāmalai mountain falls, there you will get the left side.' From Kailāsa she came, and as she came, the shadow of Tiruvannāmalai was slowly approaching Tāyanūr. 'This is the place for me to stay,' she said and stayed in Tāyanūr. Thus the Amman had told her sons in what forms she had stayed in various places and when they asked about the trace she would leave in Tāyanūr, she said:

No. 9

'Oh dear ones, what can be my trace? I have only one thing left, that is this string of pearls.' Saying this, she left the string of pearls there as her trace. When they approached Tāyanūr, the Amman found a beautiful woman there. She was amazed and cried out: 'What a strange thing, what a strange thing.' That string of pearls had taken the form of a woman, and this woman said: 'I was a string of pearls. Now I have become a woman. Oh three-eyed one, this is due to your grace. You are the cause for my having become a woman.' Because she had said this, the goddess decided to stay there that night as well and she gave the woman much advice. She said: 'I have come here as a sinner. You will partake of my sins. Wherever I go and whoever serves me, there people will worship you too. They will perform *pūcai* to you as well and you will have the name Muttāḷamman.'[2] Thus the goddess named her.

[1] from *kuṅku* - 'to decrease, diminish, to be humbled'.

[2] possessing pearls (*muttu*).

She felt that there would be difficulties, if she stayed in the same place where she had stayed the previous night, therefore, she remained with her sons at the banks of the lake.[1] When she was walking along the banks of the lake, she saw thorny bushes, bushes full of many kinds of thorns. There were prickly pear plants[2] covering an area of one thousand *vēli*.[3] While she was walking, she thought about the curse her husband had placed on her. She never even had the time to comb her hair and to remove the knots therein. Suddenly, a knot (*caṭai*) from the crown of her head came loose, it having been caught by a thorn. Unaware of it, she walked on. The knot cried out: 'Oh mother, how can you leave me behind? Is this just? What will I do, being all alone?' She replied: 'Oh son, the milk will not flow back to the breast, the knot of hair cannot be attached again to the head, you must stay here. There are 96 castes[4] in this world. You must be the deity of any caste that has devotion to me. You should protect them. You should be a helping friend to them and protect them, oh son.' The knot that heard Maheśvarī's words, felt happy and said: 'I will remain here, as you wish.'[5] The *caṭai* stayed there. Umā gave it many boons and then started walking again along the banks of the lake.

Pāvāṭairāyaṉ saw from the corner of his eyes how the Cāṇār[6] were tapping the toddy (*kal, kallu*). He saw the toddy foaming and overflowing, and he and Vīrabhadra approached their mother and said: 'Oh mother, look at that milk from the sky (*ākāyappāl*), we would like to have some of it. Oh mother, we are very eager to have some of that milk from the sky.' Umā replied: 'Oh sons, I don't have any money, I don't have any jewels I could pledge.' She tried to console her sons. The sons, however, were stubborn. Umā then approached Nallatampi Cāṉār, who was the leader of the Cāṇār, and said: 'Appā, my children are very thirsty, please give a bit of water to quench their thirst.' Nallatampi Cāṉār replied: 'Go away you crazy woman, don't you have any brains? The lake exists only for the sake of its name;

[1] The lake which lies between Tāyaṉūr and Malaiyaṉūr.

[2] *kaḷḷi - cappāttukkaḷḷi*, or possibly the spurge.

[3] *vēli* - a landmeasure, 6.74 acres.

[4] Cf. Sontheimer, *Indische Volksmärchen*, 'Die Geschichte von Birobā, dem Hirtengott',: the belief is that there are 96 Marāṭhā clans in Maharashtra.

[5] At the border of the lake is a small shrine dedicated to Caṭaimuṉi.

[6] Caste of toddy tappers.

we cannot get enough water for the morning or evening rituals. This being the case, you ask for toddy. In what way are your children different from others?'[1] Thus he spoke harshly. Umā felt that she should demonstrate her greatness (*makimai*, Skt. *mahimā*) to this fellow, and she turned all the toddy tappers into bats (*vavvāl*) and caused the lake to dry up completely, leaving not a drop of water. Nallatampi saw this and said: 'Oh Maheśvarī, I did not realize your greatness. I did this, thinking that you were begging. You should forgive me. From now on, when we do our work, we shall dedicate the first tree to you.' This vow he made. The Amman changed the bats back into Cāṇār. Thereafter, the Cāṇār prospered.

No. 10

Then the primordial Śakti walked on slowly and entered the flower-garden of Malaiyaracaṉ. The garden extended to twelve and one half *kāṇi*[2] land. There she searched for the sign, namely, the rock with which her tricky older brother had covered the pit once. Finally she found it and decided that she should observe a faultless vow for 48 days. She called together the people of the 96 castes and said: 'I need a man who will supply me with a pot of water in the morning and with *bilva*[3] leaves in the evening.' All of them declined to do the service.

At that time there was a fisherman (Cempaṭavar) called Noṇṭivīraṉ.[4] He was going to the lake with his net. Īśvarī saw him from the corner of her eyes. Maheśvarī saw Vīraṉ, a fisherman, a *noṇṭi*. She said to him: 'Who is going there? Come here before you go anywhere else.' He thought: 'One should obey an older person, whoever he or she may be. This woman seems to be very old.' (Parameśvarī appears to anyone in the very same form he or she thinks of her. She appears as an innocent girl, if one thinks of her thus, or as a very old woman, if one thinks of her thus.)[5] She appeared to that fisherman as a fragile old woman, 90 and ten years old. She appeared as a grey-haired woman

[1] The argument is somewhat unclear. Maybe he means that his children have hardly enough water, why should her children then be given free toddy.

[2] *kāṇi* - a landmeasure - 1.32 acres.

[3] Ta. *vilvam*. The Bel or wood-apple tree (*Aegle Marmelos*).

[4] *noṇṭi* - lame man.

[5] Informant's comment.

400 and ten years old.[1] She appeared to him as a grey-haired old woman. That lame fisherman came slowly limping and limping and looked at this beautiful woman. He came close to her and asked: 'Old woman, why did you call me. Oh mā, may I know who you are?' She replied: 'Appā, young man, I would like to give you a small errand. Can you do it, oh excellent one, tell me.' She asked him first whether or not he could do the task which she would give him. As for him, he was a man who could fill his stomach only when his net was sunk; he was a fisherman, he didn't have any farming to do. He was such a hungry man! What did he reply? 'Whatever be your command, we will carry it out without fail.'

Why did he say 'we'? Because he had two brothers: Cūraṉ and Ukkirakkarttaṉ. So he thought of his two younger brothers, when he said 'we'. He vowed that they would do anything she commanded, provided their stomachs got filled. The Ammaṉ replied: 'One pot of water in the morning and a bundle of *bilva* leaves in the evening, these I need. You must pour a pot of water over my head in the morning, and in the evening, it will be enough if you light a small lamp and place a bunch of *bilva* leaves on my head.'

Vīraṉ, who listend to this, asked: 'Oh mother, how many days should I do this?' Īśvarī replied: 'A fellow has cursed me.' (She did not say who the fellow was, because, had she mentioned it, the fisherman might have hesitated to do her command.) 'My husband has entitled me 'sinner' and he has cursed me. In order to remove the curse, I have to observe a fast for 48 days. I am going to fast for 48 days, and when I have completed the vow (fast), you need not do anything for me anymore.' When Īśvarī said this, Vīraṉ replied: 'So be it.' The three brothers, Vīraṉ, Cūraṉ and Ukkirakkarttaṉ performed the duty: one brother in the morning, the second at noon and the third at dusk. Thus the goddess was sitting for a while.

About 25 days later, they asked her: 'We have been serving you all these days and what benefit did we get, oh excellent one?' Umā replied: 'Sons, you need not be afraid. When the 48 days are over, come to see me, come here on the 49th day. I will grant you all the boons you want.' Thus the one with a parrot-like speech gave her word. The three brothers

[1] Hyperbole; i.e., a *very* old woman.

listened to her words and without another complaint continued to serve her. The 48 days were over. The goddess meditated on Śiva, removed the rock and sat in the pit as a termite hill.

The goddess reflected: 'What form should I take? If I take the form of a tree, people will cut me down and build houses; if I take the form of grass, the bulls and cows will eat me; if I take the form of plants, goats will eat me; if I take the form of a snake, the Irular[1] will beat me, kill me and sell my skin.'

Then she asked her brother (Viṣṇu) for advice. He said: 'What you think is right; if, however, you take the form of a termite hill, then you will be well off and you will live a long time. Therefore, you should 'grow' as a termite hill.' Then the Amman̲ said: 'If I am a termite hill, there should also be a snake therein.' Mahāviṣṇu said: 'If you are a snake, you will bite, and much poison will flow from your fangs.' The Amman̲ replied: 'But I don't know how to bite. I will be a five-headed snake.' Mahāviṣṇu said: 'People say that one can die from the poison of just two fangs; if you have five heads, you will have ten fangs - if you bite people, they will not survive. So, don't be a snake!' But the Amman̲ retorted: 'I don't know how to bite. The poison will only be in my eyes. I will not trouble people. I will not bite anyone. The poison will be in my eyes, and only if I look at somebody will that person die.' Then Mahāviṣṇu gave his assent, and the Amman̲ took the form of a maiden termite hill (*kan̲n̲ippuṟṟu*).

The Amman̲ changed her form at midnight. The three brothers were not aware of this change. They woke up in the morning and decided, since the 48 days were over, they should go and ask the goddess for boons. When they arrived, they found a termite hill. 'What a strange thing (*putumai*),' they thought. They addressed each other: 'Oh brother, what a strange thing. That old woman was sitting here yesterday. We served her for 48 days and when we come to ask her for boons, she suddenly goes away somewhere.' They felt bad and rebuked the goddess: 'Where is this Amali or Nirmali.[2] Oh brother, all the service we performed for this wretched woman has turned to waste. We served her for 48 days and now she has gone without

[1] Name of some tribal communities inhabiting the Nilgiri hills and the Eastern plains.

[2] Amali, Nirmali - without '*mala*', i.e., spotless, pure.

a trace!' Thus they were rebuking her. (Even today people are rebuking her, saying, 'she has granted this to that one, what has she granted to me?' This kind of rebuke seems to have originated in those days.)

At that moment, the Ādiśakti, the fiery one, started to speak from the skies (in an invisible form); she said as a bodiless voice: 'Oh sons, don't be afraid. Don't speak foolishly. Dear ones, don't rebuke me. I am going to sit here as a termite hill. I am going to remain in the termite hill with a rare form. You three go around me now, saying that you want food. You cry. You think that you have not been paid for your services all these days. You want food for your belly. Okay, but in the near future, 48'448 diseases produced by my sister are going to spread in this world. I am going to take the form of medicine for all those diseases. If you take a little bit of earth from the termite hill (*purruman*), mix it with the ashes from the cremation ground and distribute the mixture as medicine, saying my name three times, the 48'448 diseases will be cured. The people will be pleased and they will pour out as much wealth to you as you want. You shall not be poor.' Thus Umā gave her word.

She changed into the termite hill, and in those days Malaiyaracaṉ saw this and he thought: 'These three fishermen (Vīraṉ, Cūraṉ and Ukkirakkartaṉ) have put up a *pantal* in the garden of twelve and one half *kāni* land. They are performing *pūcai* to a termite hill. How can they do this, without proper titles for ownership of the land.' The king called in his guards and said: 'Go, bring these three brothers tied up.' The guards ran, tied up the three brothers and took them to the king. They said to the king: 'Oh lord, why did you call us? Please tell us.' 'Hey fellows, how haughty can you be. You maintain a termite hill in a garden that belongs to us. The garden is a place where the women take a walk. If there is a termite hill, there is bound to be a snake in it. That snake might bite the women who go to the garden to pluck flowers. The termite hill should not be there. You level it to the ground.' The king ordered them thus. What did the three brothers do? 'Oh mother, all the boons you gave us have turned into lies. Oh mother, you gave your word that you would protect us for 21 generations, as long as the rock and the Kāvēri exist, as long as grass and plants exist and as long as the sun and the moon exist. You promised that you would protect Vīraṉ, Cūraṉ and Ukkirakkarttaṉ,

but now the king has issued this order. What will we do?' Thus the three brothers sat meditating on the goddess.

The king said to the guards: 'Go and fetch the Oṭṭar.[1] Ask them to come here with their baskets. Tell them to level the termite hill and to throw the earth into the river.' The guards went to instruct the Oṭṭar. They came with their baskets and shovels and started to dig up the termite hill. They completed the job, went to the king and reported: 'Oh king, as you instructed, we have levelled the termite hill and thrown the earth into the river. We have completed our job.' Then they returned to their houses.

Īśvarī decided that the ignorant people should be taught a lesson. She took the form of a termite hill, as big as a mountain, in the very same place where there had been a small termite hill the previous day.

The king sent his guards to see what the place was like after the removal of the termite hill. The guards saw the mountain-like termite hill and ran back to report to the king. They said: 'Oh lord, we don't know how to describe this strange thing. Yesterday there was a small termite hill. It was levelled. Today there is a termite hill as huge as a mountain. We are puzzled over its big size. We wonder whether it is just earth or a god. Nowhere have we seen something strange like this happen.' The king got angry. He ordered 60 workers to level the termite hill. The previous day he had ordered 20 Oṭṭar to do the job. Their 20 baskets had just been enough for the earth of the previous termite hill.

The 60 Oṭṭar got ready to go to the garden, each carrying a shovel and a basket. Their wives said: 'Where are you going? Why do you go out each day with shovels and baskets?' Their husbands said: 'Oh crazy women, who do you think Malaiyaracaṉ is? He is the lord of half the country, and he has issued an order. It seems there is a termite hill in the garden. Yesterday it was a small termite hill, so 20 of us went there, today there seems to be a large termite hill, so the king has ordered 60 of us to go. That is why we are going.' The women replied: 'Whatever it may be, you should know the nature of a termite hill. It is possible that there might be snakes inside it. You should stand far away from it and keep your basket far away. Taking these precautions, you dig and then throw the earth away.' The husbands took their wives'

[1] Cf. Thurston (1909 C&T), vol. V, 'Odde, Voddas'. According to Thurston they are Telugu people who came originally from Orissa. They quarry stones, construct wells and tanks and do other kinds of earth work.

words seriously. They came in a hurry to the king and asked: 'Oh lord, what did you call us for?' 'Yesterday 20 of you went to level a small termite hill. Today there is a big termite hill and 60 of you should level it,' the king replied. The 60 Ottar started out right away. When they came to the garden, they saw the huge termite hill standing high like a mountain. Each one started to dig furiously. In each spot where the shovel hit, a demon jumped out. There came forth 60 demons, male and female. For each Ottar there was a demon, 60 demons. Each demon devoured one Ottar and returned into the termite hill. The only trace left of the Ottar were their baskets, shovels, the towels and dhoties they had placed around. Other than this, there was no sign of the men.

It was dusk. The 60 wives of the Ottar got worried, since their husbands had not returned yet. They went to the king and said: 'Oh lord, our husbands have not returned. What job did you give them? We don't see them returning yet. We don't know what job you gave them yesterday, but they returned within one hour, but today they have not come back. Where did they go? Why have they not come back?' The king said: 'What, the men whom I sent in the morning have not returned home yet? I saw them only this morning, when I sent them out. I don't know where they went or what became of them.' As soon as the women heard this, they ran off shouting and crying. Where did they run? They ran to the garden. There they saw the signs of their husbands. What were the signs? The towels, dhoties and shirts. On seeing these signs, they started crying out loud, their crying was like the crying of the calf when it is separated from the cow.

In the meantime the king thought: 'What a strange thing this is. The men we sent yesterday returned. What happened today? Let us go and see.' He arrived quickly, all alone, riding on a horse. The king arrived in the park. The women were crying. There were signs of men: dhotis, towels, etc. The king saw them and thought: 'There is something strange going on here. There is something about the termite hill which cannot be explained. Who could help us here? Vīraṉ, Cūraṉ and Ukkirakkarttaṉ were performing some duties here. We had ordered them bound and beaten up. Perhaps we can find out the truth about this termite hill, if we ask them.'

He sent his warriors to fetch the three fishermen. The guards ran quickly, fetched the three brothers, and when they arrived, the king received them with honours and said: 'Oh sons, not knowing the greatness of this termite hill, I committed a sin. I ordered the Ottar to level it and throw the earth into the river. I did not know the greatness of this termite hill. Now I do not know where those Ottar went. I thought that maybe you might know. That is why I had you brought here. Please tell me the story of this termite hill and, if you can, bring those Ottar back alive. I shall grant you whatever you may ask for.'

The three brothers listened to the king's words and said: 'Oh mother, not knowing your greatness, the king committed a sin. Not knowing your form, all these people gave their life. You should forgive them.[1] Aṅkāḷi, you who possess immense greatness, you are the only goddess. You should give back their lives so that the people of the world can witness your greatness.' Thus the three prayed to the goddess.

When the prayers were finished, the 60 Ottar came out of the termite hill like winged termites (*Īcal*). They emerged as if they had just had their morning baths, their breakfast and done similar morning routines. All 60 of them came out happily, as if they had completed their bath and breakfast and were putting out their clothes to dry. The king saw this and realized that the three fishermen had received the divine grace. He was prepared to give them whatever they wanted.

They said: 'We don't want land for ourselves, oh king, oh beautiful one. Please gift this twelve and one half *kāṇi* land to the goddess. This is all we want. This twelve and one half *kāṇi* land should be the property of the goddess, and we should have the right to administer it.' The king was pleased that they had not asked anything for themselves. He gifted the twelve and one half *kāṇi* land to the goddess and gave the right to administer it to the three fishermen. Then the king ruled the country happily.

Now, how did the fishermen become devoted to the goddess in Malaiyaṉūr? Once Malaiyaracaṉ did penance in order to obtain Pārvatī as his daughter....

[1] Lit. 'save' or 'protect' (*kāppāṟṟa*) (them).

No. 11

At the time when the Amman settled in the form of a termite hill in Malaiyanūr, it happened that the Rākṣasas (*arakkar*) kicked and beat up the gods at night. The gods Rudra, Brahmā and Mahāviṣṇu were crying. Now Parvatarājan (Malaiyaracan) did not have a child. He asked the gods for the boon to be given a child. 'Penṇē, you go to the earth and get born as the daughter of Parvatarājan, then I shall come to marry you,' Śiva said to Pārvatī. 'Okay,' she said and was born as Aṅkāḷamman, daughter of Parvatarājan. Day by day she grew into a beautiful woman.

During this time, the Rākṣasas kept beating up the gods. The gods went to Vaikuntha to see Mahāviṣṇu. Mahāviṣṇu said: 'Appā, my younger sister is not here. Let us all go to Kailāsa and talk to Śiva.' They all went to Kailāsa and asked Śiva for advice. Śiva said: 'I cannot do anything about this. I cannot destroy the Asuras. My Śakti, who has been born as the daughter of Parvatarājan, only she can do it.' 'Okay, let us all go there.'

They went to Parvatarājan's place and said to the king: 'Appā, bestow your daughter in marriage to Śiva.' The king said: 'Why should I not give my daughter to Śiva, I shall give her to you now.' The gods replied: 'We have a problem. Can you help us solve it?' 'I shall help you,' Parvatarājan said. The gods said: 'Our problem is that the Rākṣasas beat us up at night.' Then the king said: 'A problem like this I cannot solve.' Mahāviṣṇu said: 'If your daughter is to get married to my (future) brother-in-law,[1] you are to solve this problem.' The king replied: 'I cannot solve this problem, Cāmi, what can I do?' Then Mahāviṣṇu said: 'Then go and call your daughter, ask her, she will tell you how to solve it.' He called Pārvatī, born as Amman. She said (upon hearing the problem): 'Appā, if I am to solve their problem, ask them if they could be my slaves (*aṭiyār*)[2] for a day.' The gods agreed to this.

The 33 crores of gods and sages, the 48 thousand Ṛsis, the regents of the eight cardinal points (*aṣṭatikkuppālakar*, Skt. *aṣṭadikpālās*), Yama (Ematarumarājan), the moon, the sun, all promised to be her slaves. She joined them all together and made a *ñāna valai* (a net of wisdom) out of them. She made the net, knotting them together; then she made a copper

[1] Ta. *maittunan*.

[2] *aṭiyār* means also 'devotees'.

boat (*cempuppaṭavu*).[1] She asked Parvatarājaṉ to sit in that boat and said: 'Appā, go and destroy (them).' She put him into the boat and pushed him into the sea. As soon as he threw the net, all the Rākṣasas in the form of fishes sat near Mīṉamaharṣi.[2] - During the day time the Rākṣasas take the form (*avatāram*) of fishes, during the night they change into Rākṣasas in order to beat up the gods.

As it was so, the king cast the net and the fishes were caught, but when he threw them into the boat, they jumped up and fell back into the sea. Who? These Rākṣasas. When he saw them jumping back into the ocean, the king cried: 'Ammā, why does this misfortune happen to me! I know how to catch them, but I don't know where to put them; they go jumping back, mother, Ammā!' He felt much sorrow. When it was like this, what did the Ammaṉ do? The Ammaṉ opened her mouth as wide as the copper boat. As soon as she did this, he caught all the fishes, put them into her mouth and she swallowed them. So he conquered the Asuras. Then all the gods came and said: 'Appā, you have relieved us from our torture. Śiva will marry your daughter and he will take her to Kailāsa, but your box (fishing box) should not be filled, you shall not go on land.'[3] Śiva cursed the king thus. 'You made a copper boat and went fishing into the sea, so from today onwards you are *cempaṭavā, cempaṭavā*,'[4] thus he named Parvatarājaṉ and left.

At the time when the Ammaṉ was sitting on the twelve and one half *kāṇi* land, the place where the fishermen were, she asked her brother: 'Aṇṇā, what kind of offerings and *pūcai* will people give me?' Mahāviṣṇu replied: 'They will offer you goats, chickens and pigs; you accept these and eat them!' But she said: 'I don't want goats, chickens and pigs, I don't want this sort of *pūcai*. Turmeric and lime mixed with rice, blood rice,[5] if they give me this as offering, this I shall eat.' 'Right, sister, let it be like this.' Then Mahāviṣṇu continued: 'At the time when Paramaṉ

[1] also *ceppuppaṭaku/paṭavu*.

[2] See below, Ch. II, part 2, 'Cempaṭavar'.

[3] i.e., he shall be a fisherman.

[4] i.e., one with a copper boat, a Cempaṭavar.

[5] the rice turns red when mixed with turmeric and lime - a rice that looks like blood rice, but is not. The goddess refuses the non-vegetarian offerings, because by law no animals should be sacrificed for her (see Ch. II, A. 2.).

(Śiva) will come here as a madman, you will take your true form. Then you shall save him, take him as your husband - then you shall get his left side.'

It was during the time when the Ammaṉ was doing *tavam* in the form of the termite hill that Śiva came, on *amāvācai* (*amāvāsyā*), on the day after *civaṉrāttiri* (*śivarātri*). He came roaming around with a begging bowl, asking for alms. Why? ...

No. 12

It happened once, when Pārvatī was returning to Kailāsa, that both Śiva and Brahmā were sitting there. Since both of them had five heads, she was not able to tell them apart, and thus she prostrated herself in front of Brahmā, thinking him to be her husband, and she received his blessings. Brahmā thereupon started to laugh, which made the Ammaṉ very angry. She said to him: 'So you are laughing because I have now lost my faithfulness as wife of Śiva! I am cursing you that your head shall be cut off.' Īśvara, who also was angry, plucked off one head, he plucked off 999 heads of Brahmā. After he had cut off one thousand heads, Brahmā said: 'You have plucked off my head, therefore you shall go to the cremation ground and wander around there without food, without sleep, like a beggar you shall go around.' Ṯhus Brahmā cursed him. Because of that curse, Śiva had to go around begging. With a begging bowl he asked for alms. When he received the offerings, the *kapālam* (*kapāla*, i.e., the skull of Brahmā, the begging bowl) which had gotten stuck to his hand, ate everything. Thus without food, without eating, he was rolling around in the ashes of the cremation ground. As he was rolling around in the ashes like this, he finally came to lie down in the cremation ground here in Malaiyaṉūr.

At this time, the Ammaṉ, who was doing *tavam*, saw Civaperumāṉ (Śiva). She thought: 'Whom should I appoint as guard? He (Śiva) is mad, and he might get up and go somewhere else. What would I do, if he left? It is in this place that I have to get his left side.' What did she do? She started to think: 'How long should I reflect? Whom should I place as guard? Right, let it be Vināyaka. He is the right person; because he has a big belly, he can sit there.' 'You, Vināyaka, sit there! People will bring you *koḻukkaṭṭai*[1] on *civaṉrāttiri*. You eat these and stay there and

[1] a sweet, steamed round cake of rice flour, usually with coconut scrapings, sugar, etc. Vinayāka (Gaṇeśa) is often portrayed holding such a cake in his hand.

watch,' she said to Vināyaka and continued her *tavam*. At dawn she had to go to the cremation ground. She needed some *koḻukkaṭṭai* for Vināyaka. When at dawn the lame Cempaṭavar came, she told him: 'Appā, you have to bring me *koḻukkaṭṭai*.' As soon as he had brought these, she placed them into a basket and took them to the cremation ground. In the cremation ground she scattered them. All the Ammaṉ's demons (*pūtam*) came down and picked them up. Nine crores of Māyāśakti came and picked them up, and Vināyaka also felt a desire for the *koḻukkaṭṭai* and he also picked them up. Ammaṉ kept throwing them. What did she throw? That turmeric and lime mixed with rice, that blood rice, she threw. And again all the spirits (*pēy, picācu*, Skt. *piśāca*) came and picked up the morsels.

Then the *kapālam* on Śiva's hand thought: 'All these beings pick up these things, so let me also get down and take some to still my hunger.' The *kapālam* left Śiva's hand and started to eat the food. As soon as the *kapālam* had left Śiva's hand, Śiva's head became clear again and he got back his normal state. He said: 'Pennē, Pārvatī,' and he ran to her, making himself small. The Ammaṉ changed into her frightful (*akōra*) form, a huge form. Śiva ran behind her to hide, and she trampled the head. She, Īśvarī, took the *akōra* form, the form of Kālī (Kāḷi), of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, and she trampled the *kapālam*. Then the head of Brahmā (the *kapālam*) asked her: 'Will you give me one hundred thousand lives a day?' The Ammaṉ replied: 'Yes, I shall give them to you.' He asked: 'How will you give them to me?' She replied: 'My people catch fish, they catch one hundred thousand fish and the lives of these they will offer to you.' After she had granted this boon, she continued: 'Since you made my lord suffer so much, there shall be no Brahmā temple anywhere in this and the two times seven worlds.' Thus she cursed him.

Then the Ammaṉ 'obtained' the left side of Śiva, and together they left for Kailāsa.

Thus the Ammaṉ came to settle in Malaiyaṉūr and took the Cempaṭavar as her slaves (devotees). She gets *pūcai, poṅkal*[1] and *naivēttiyam* (*naivedya*),[2] and she helps solving and curing the people's 48'488 problems and diseases by giving them earth and earth mixed with turmeric from the termite hill. She releases people from their madness (*pittu*). She gives

[1] boiled rice. Often sugar and spices are added to it.

[2] an offering of food.

boons to people, and she gets *pūcai* in return and eats. Since that time she looks after these crores of Cempaṭavar; with her *cakti* she looks after Parvatarājaṉ's family. She takes care of all of them and protects them. As a *kaṉṉippuṟṟu* she came here.

B. The image of the goddess according to the myths.

1. Introduction

A major problem in dealing with 'folk' Hinduism is the choice of terms. Since Hinduism operates on many levels or combines elements from various levels or strata in the so-called process of 'sanskritization', one is somewhat at a loss as to which terms should be applied to these levels. V. Das[1] has shown how terms of opposites such as 'sanskritic', 'non-sanskritic', 'sacred', 'profane', 'good-sacred', 'bad-sacred' may be confusing, if not confined to a particular context. The same may be said for 'little' and 'big' traditions or for 'village' gods.

The goddess Aṅkāḷamman is worshipped as much in rural as in urban areas; and depending on which temple, or what historical time in the same temple, is being referred to, she is both *cuttam* (Skt. *śuddha*; pure, vegetarian) and *acuttam* (Skt. *aśuddha*; impure, non-vegetarian). The terms *cuttam*, *acuttam*, used by informants to signify the existence or absence of animal sacrifices for the goddess, do not necessarily comprise a statement on the character of the goddess. She may be *cuttam* and yet be identified with the terrible Kālī.

According to V. Das, who uses the terms left (death, inauspiciousness) and right (life, auspiciousness) over pure, bounded (articulated) and impure, liminal (disarticulated), Aṅkāḷamman is a goddess who fits only the left category, but both aspects of it (the impure, liminal as well as the pure, bounded).[2] As V. Das points out, goddesses can be distributed among any of the four categories: right; impure, liminal; left; pure, bounded. Thus, for instance, the mother goddess in her benevolent aspect would fit the category right and liminal, whereas in her malevolent aspect she could be placed in the left and liminal category. Although these categories give room for a more precise description of particular aspects of goddesses, they do not suffice to describe a goddess as a whole, especially since a goddess may move from one category to another or even, in her various aspects, take part in all categories at the same time. To place Aṅkāḷamman into the left side is telling only half her story, at least with regard to her image in the myths.

[1] Veena Das, *Structure and Cognition*, (1982).

[2] *ibid.*, p. 102-3, 143, 147.

The myths make clear the problematics of any classification. They show that the goddess can be anything from a sophisticated cosmogonic concept to a very localized and socially clearly defined female deity, that she can be both benevolent and malevolent, pure and impure.

The myths also show us how much the Tamil (local) and the Sanskrit (pan-Hindu) traditions are interwoven, and, to some extent, we find this reflected in the names which the narrators give to the deities. Viṣṇu is most of the time referred to as Mahāviṣṇu and Kaṇṇaṉ, but not as Perumāḷ. The goddess is variously called Umā, Īśvarī, Pārvatī and Ammaṉ; often, though not consistently, the goddess in her terrifying, destructive or 'impure' aspect is referred to as Ammaṉ, while, especially as wife of Śiva, she is Pārvatī or Umā. Terms such as Trimūrti, Rākṣasa and their Tamil(ized) counterparts, Mummūrtti, Arakkar find equal application. It is also interesting that the three gods, the Trimūrti, are always Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra (rather than Śiva) and once, in Rudra's absence, Indra is simply substituted (Myth No. 3).

In her history (*varalāṟu*), the goddess takes us through a multitude of spaces. We are with her at creation and follow her through the world of gods, of humans to the world of animals and animated objects. We see her well established among the Hindu gods, identified with well-known goddesses (Reṇukā, Kāmākṣī), but we also find her trace in very specific earthly places known only to a small group of people. The narrator lets his goddess partake of all spaces at the same time: he turns her into Māriyammaṉ (half Cakkilicci, half Brahmin) who can demand a goat sacrifice from Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī and to whom is offered the sacred fire on Aruṇācala mountain, and he describes her as a married woman worried about her toe-ring or as an androgynous, dangerous power in the termite hill.

A specific location (the land on which the termite hill appears, i.e., Malaiyaṉūr) is ruled by a mythic king (Malaiyaracaṉ, i.e., Himavat), and a specific historical event ('The Madras Animals and Birds sacrifices Prohibition Act of 1950') is woven into the myth (end of Myth 11). For the narrator Viṣṇu is as much the husband of 'pure' Lakṣmī as he is the black local god, he is the goddess' son as well as her brother and guardian of her sanctum. The narrator sees no contradiction in this; nor does it occur to him, when asked to relate the story of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, to withhold myths about other goddesses if he thinks that they are essential for the

portrait of Aṅkāḷamman. Aṅkāḷamman to him is more than just Aṅkāḷamman; he does not squeeze her into a clearly defined concept with boundaries which she cannot transgress; on the contrary, he likes his goddess to tear down as many fences as possible and for her to be part of a world as large and complex as he may perceive it.

The arrangement of the myths exhibits a certain order (an order both informants more or less adhered to): the narration begins with creation and the goddess' desire for a husband, followed by Aṅkāḷamman's wanderings on earth and her identification with various other goddesses; towards the end we hear of the miraculous appearance of the termite hill. The final statement is that the goddess joins Śiva in his Ardhanārīśvara form. The goddess describes a full circle in the myths. The cosmic snake becomes the snake in the termite hill, the primordial woman with the male attributes changes into a full female (Pārvatī on Kailāsa) who, on her way down to earth and into the nether world (the home of the snakes), slowly regains the male attributes, only to be in the end what she was in the beginning with, however, a subtle difference: her final form (the female joined with the male, Ardhanārīśvara) is viewed as an ideal - the single-minded wish of the goddess is to be the left half of Śiva - whereas her initial form (the woman lacking the female qualities) is perceived as an anomaly. The Śakti who creates (and destroys) represents an unbalanced state, while the image of Śiva/Śakti expresses a harmony. Disharmony and harmony are not successive stages in time, but simultaneous and continuous states, and the goddess' image can change according to how much either the aspect of harmony or disharmony is prevalent in her character.

The myths clearly fall into three major categories dealing 1. with creation, 2. with the establishment of the goddess on earth in an anthropomorphic form and 3. with the manifestation of the goddess in a non-anthropomorphic form.

2. Creation

O'Flaherty speaks of 'three major methods of creation: incest, oblation (a fire sacrifice), and dismemberment (the sacrifice of the androgynous Self into two pieces)'.[1] The first part of our myth echoes the famous *hiraṇyagarbha* cosmogony, creation from the golden egg (or womb). Instead of Brahmā,[2] it is the goddess, the Ādiśakti who is the germinating power within the egg. The first major division is into the upper and lower portions of the universe or into the smallest (the atom) and the largest (the universe), further into water and earth.[3]

It is appropriate that the form the goddess takes in order to create is that of the snake or serpent. The snake in India and elsewhere is a symbol for fertility and for the constant renewal of life.[4] Some of the goddess' original attributes can also be understood as belonging to the snake. The eye of the forehead has the power to burn, to destroy. Snakes are called 'poison-eyed', they can destroy by means of sight.[5] The goddess herself makes this clear when she says that the poison will be in her eyes and that she will be able to kill someone by looking at him (myth 10). The gem (*maṇi*) may be the jewel which snakes are thought to carry in their hood.[6] This gem, together with the mantra and medicine (*aviḻtam* - see below) are supposed to cure serpents' bites. Serpents are thought to have the knowledge of medicinal herbs,[7] they are also in possession of magical spells.[8] Finally, the five faces are the spread hood of the cobra which is often represented with three, five or seven heads and which, in iconographic representations of the goddess, is shown as arching over her head.

The world thus created is not complete yet, it is unbalanced. The earth is barren and shakes. The goddess' first act, for the purpose of

[1] O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 33

[2] Bühler (1967), Manu I.8-9. On the *hiraṇyagarbha* cosmogony see also Rg Veda X.121.1.

[3] The two times seven worlds are the upper worlds (*mēlulaku*) of which there are seven and the lower worlds (*kīḻulaku*) of which there are seven. (Winsl.)

[4] Eliade (1974), p. 164 ff.; Vogel (1972), p. 19.

[5] Vogel (1972), p. 16, 17. The snake's poison turns into fire, p. 47, 68.

[6] *ibid.*, p. 25. Serpents are the guardians of wealth, especially jewels, p. 23 ff.

[7] *ibid.*, p. 17, quoting Atharva Veda viii.7.23.

[8] *ibid.*, p. 21-22.

bringing order into the creation, is to place the eight elephants into the respective eight directions in order to support the earth. The next step is the goddess' thought that to be alone is 'not proper', followed by her desire for company. It is interesting that here the goddess' need for 'a second' does not immediately evoke the idea of a male companion and that her eventual desire for a husband is not so much governed by a wish to bear progenies as it is by her realization that her female companions (i.e., she herself) are not normal because they lack the female qualities.[1] It is quite clear that part of the ordering is to give the woman her proper place, namely, beside her husband.

As soon as the first godly being, whether male or female, longs for the second, a counterpart, the problem of incest arises. The second, who is created from the first, will be either the son of the first female or the daughter of the first male; or, if the one splits into halves, they will be brother and sister. An elegant way of evading the problem of incest is, of course, the splitting of the androgyne (but even there the problem is not always avoided).[2] The three gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra, whom the goddess creates in order to make them (or one of them) her husband, refuse her lustful advances because, as they say, she is their mother, with the result that the goddess burns them. Taking the advice of her elder brother,[3] the goddess resurrects the Trimūrti and this time succeeds in securing a husband. Another variant of this myth shows the same pattern:

> 'At the beginning was the Parāśakti, she was the *aṇṭapiṇṭam* and hers were the five things: the eye on the forehead, the *tiricūlam*, the gem, the mantra and the medicine (*aviḻtam*). She thought: 'If I want to create the material universe, I should have a husband.' She took a handful of earth and saying the mantra, she threw it; out of the earth a form came, saying 'mother'. She thought: 'This one is calling me 'mother', I don't want a son, I want a husband,' and she burned it with the eye on her forehead, which is the sun. - It was Rudra, that

[1] Cf. Tiruvil. *vacaṉam* (1961), p. 60: As soon as Taṭātakai sees Śiva (her husband to be) three of the four female qualities (*nāṇam, maṭam, accam*) arise within her.

[2] Cf. e.g., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, I.4.3-4.

[3] The inconsistency arises because Viṣnu is both the goddess' brother as well as one of the Trimūrti, the latter being perceived as a unit.

first one she burned. - She created another being; that one too called her 'mother', and she burned it. The third one did not call her anything. He asked: 'What's the matter, who called me, what is the reason?' The goddess explained to him that she wanted a husband. The figure said to her: 'Bring back to life the first one which you have burned.' She did so by means of a mantra. Rudra came back to life. She also resurrected Brahmā. Then Mahāviṣṇu said to Rudra: 'Agree to be her husband on condition that she gives you her five attributes.' The Ammaṉ gave these five things to Rudra, and as she was standing in front of him, Viṣṇu said to Rudra: 'Open your eyes.' As soon as he did, the Ammaṉ was burned. Then Mahāviṣṇu took the ashes and gave them to Rudra, saying: 'Thus you two are married now.' The ashes turned into Īśvarī. Rudra then gave some ashes to Mahāviṣṇu, saying the same words, and thus Viṣṇu got Lakṣmī. The same was done for Brahmā.' (Rat.)

The question one might well ask is: 'Why do the resurrected gods protest their marriage with their mother much less vehemently than did the initially created gods?' The creation myths of Ellamma and Peddamma recorded in Oppert[1] may give us an answer. Both Ellamma and Peddamma are Ādiśaktis who desire a husband. Ellamma turns herself into a hen in order to be fertilized by the cock which has arisen from the root of a plant, planted by her on a mountain. From one of the three eggs which she lays, the Trimūrti are born. When she asks them to satisfy her desire (she is in the form of a woman again), they refuse, saying that she is their mother, upon which Ellamma points out that she is not their mother, but their grandmother since they were born from an egg. Peddamma uses exactly the same argument in order to dispel the doubts of the gods, she tells them that she is their grandmother since they were born from an egg.

What we would suggest then, is that the burning and resurrection of the gods in our stories have the same function (in myth No. 1 the goddess creates the gods from the third heap of ashes), namely, to change the mother-son relationship into a grandmother-grandson relationship, which, if not eliminating the threat of incest, at least weakens it to such a considerable extent that the marriage may be tolerated. The goddess' foremost concern is to get married, to be given the role of a wife; the emphasis

[1] Oppert (1893), p. 465, 472.

is on attaining her proper place within the ordered world, and, therefore, the goddess (or the mythmaker) has to find a way of legitimizing that marriage. Certainly, a grandmother-grandson marriage is not as a rule possible; however, in some Dravidian kinship systems the marriage between alternate generations does, even if rarely, occur, which implies that such a marriage may not generally be considered (at least in thought) as an absolute impossibility.[1]

With the promise of marriage, the goddess gets tricked into giving away those things which make her powerful, foremost among them the eye on her forehead, and Śiva does not hesitate to use it. The goddess has to be burned. Though, so far, the gods may have accepted her as a wife within the framework of the kinship system, there is still a major obstacle to be removed: her age. Kṛṣṇa makes the 'mistake' of calling her 'elder sister' (*akkāḷ*) instead of the usual 'younger sister' (*taṅkai*). Firstly, as a marriage partner she should be younger than her husband and secondly, as an old woman, as mother, she is identifiable with the sexually dangerous female, the 'mare'.[2] By giving away her 'weapons', especially her third eye, the goddess loses her power. Ellamma becomes so weak that her robe is a burden to her, and Peddamma turns into a woman of 100 years (an age which excludes any form of sexual threat). Another variant of the myth explicitly states that the goddess' sexual desires have to be removed. The Ādiśakti, who this time lusts after Viṣṇu, 'loses one half her fat' after she hands over the cakra and the third eye to him. He then tells her to 'bathe in the sea to allay her amorous desires.'[3]

[1] Cf. Elwin (1939), p. 180: 'The Baiga, however, recognize two exceptions to the general custom [i.e., clan-exogamy and prohibition of union of close kin]: they allow the cross-cousin marriage and they accord a remarkable permission to the union of grandparents and grandchildren and other relations who belong to these generations.' Elwin cites the following actual examples: Ego married her son's son, and ego married his mother's mother. Cf. Elwin (1947), p. 68: 'There is no objection to his marrying his grandmother or granddaughter even when they are in the direct line of relationship. A few cases are known of men marrying their great-aunts or grand-nieces.' (I owe thanks to Dagmar Stachowski, Heidelberg, for finding these references for me.) Cf. also Trautmann (1981), p. 198. The potentiality for marriages between grandparents and grandchildren is expressed within the framework of the joking relationship.

[2] O'Flaherty (1981), p. 55, 99, 100, 110.

[3] Elmore (1925), p. 94.

Two strands of power are interwoven in these myths: creative power and sexual power. The erotic nature of the third eye, its relation to the third breast and to the phallus has been discussed by D. Shulman.[1] In the following variant of the Aṅkālamman creation myth the Ādiśakti has in fact three breasts:

> As Ādiśakti Devī was quite horrible and demon-like. She had two horns, three breasts and three eyes. After she had created Pillaiyār[2] and Śiva, Śiva asked for the third eye. Śakti said that the third eye would burn Śiva because of its power. With her two horns she was able to fight any demon, but if that was unsuccessful, she could always use her third eye. The three breasts she had in order to feed all beings. Śiva insisted on having the third eye. Śakti gave it to him, but Śiva could not bear its heat and so he jumped into various rivers, trying to cool himself. Finally, Śakti took pity on him and in order to release him from the heat, she placed her middle breast on his head and thus cooled him. (Mdr-Culai).

In myth 7 the breast which the goddess placed on Śiva's head is equated with Gaṅgā. Gaṅgā, like Valli (of Murukan) and Bāṇāi (of Khandobā),[3] is the erotic second wife of the god. She herewith absorbs, so to speak, the dangerous excess of erotic power which has to be surrendered by the other goddess in order to win the title of the lawfully wedded wife. (The equation of the breast with Gaṅgā is not surprising: milk is generally considered cooling; at the same time, the breast's life-giving or life-sustaining power can become dangerous and destructive, as is demonstrated by the well-known episode of Kannaki's igniting Madurai with her torn-off breast).[4] The third, anomalous breast which is removed, reminds us also of Mīnakṣī or Tatātakai whose third breast disappears when she meets her husband.[5]

[1] Shulman (1980), p. 208, 209.

[2] According to this version, the goddess made the first being she had created with sand her child, because it had called her 'mother'.

[3] Sontheimer (1976), p. 21, p. 61 ff.

[4] Cilap. (1968), ch. 21, l.43 ff. (p. 487). Here we also think of Pūtanā who attempts to kill Krsna with her 'poisonous' breast. See O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 214.

[5] Dessigane (1960), p. 13, Tiruvil. *vacanam* (1961), p. 60.

Apart from turning the goddess into an acceptable marriage partner, creating the goddess from ashes has a deeper meaning, one especially relevant to the cult of Aṅkāḷamman̲. Aṅkāḷamman̲ is a deity of the cremation ground, and - as we shall see - she is, in fact, 'created' from the ashes of burned bodies once a year during the festival. She is then the sacrifice, the food offered to fire (or hunger), and her sacrifice is a prerequisite for the renewal of life.[1]

The contradictory[2] and confusing[3] statements in the creation myth may be due to the narrator's attempt to weld different cosmogonies. On the one hand, the goddess is perceived as primeval substance. She is the *aṇṭapiṇṭam*; she is also the sole creatrix. Yet, on the other hand, she says that she needs a husband (*puruṣan̲*) to create the material universe (*pirapañcam*) - a reversal of those cosmogonies in which the male needs a female in order to create.[4] A further belief which the myth has to accommodate is the one in a tripartite process of creation, maintenance and destruction, functions attributed to the Trimūrti. The three gods require each his śakti. Icchāśakti, Kriyāśakti and Jñānaśakti become, in the above version of the myth, the wives of the gods and are created from the ashes of the one goddess. The three Śaktis emanating from or contained in the primordial woman remind us of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*.[5] The gift of her five attributes to Śiva turns the goddess into a full female. We can compare this to the splitting into two of the androgyne. Ironically, however, no children are born from the union of the goddess with her husband; her children are created by her alone.

The integration of Viṣṇu in the myth presents another problem to the narrator. Since Viṣṇu is the goddess' elder brother, he cannot be her child. The goddess says, in myth No. 1, to Kṛṣṇa that she created the Trimūrti before he was born. Evidently, the narrator makes a distinction between Kṛṣṇa (Mahāviṣṇu) and Viṣṇu of the Trimūrti. Kṛṣṇa and Mahāviṣṇu function as brother of the goddess. They are much closer to the goddess

[1] For oblation into fire, Agni as 'eater', as death and means for rebirth, cf. O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 32-33 (from Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.2.4.1-8a).

[2] Though the goddess has the ability to create by herself, she says she needs a husband to do so.

[3] e.g., Rudra and Viṣṇu create the Trimūrti.

[4] See e.g., Brown (1974), p. 124 ff., p. 140 ff. on the cosmogony in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*.

[5] e.g., in Sāṃkhya. Dasgupta (1975), p. 243 ff. Cf. Brown (1974), p. 134 ff. and p. 148 ff. on the development of the three *guṇas* into goddesses.

and to the folk cult than Viṣṇu who, like Śiva and Brahmā, is a god of 'heaven'. This double image of Viṣṇu may explain this god's protective but at times also antagonistic behaviour towards the goddess.

We can say that our creation myth incorporates parts of all three methods of creation. The goddess is the primordial 'being' which splits into the creative process, she is the androgyne and the incestuous female. She is not only the 'oblation' for the fire, but also the destructive fire (death). Because in the act of creation everything has to be given its proper place, the goddess has to be turned into a 'wife'. Her loss of power (i.e., the loss of her 'male-ness') and her attainment of the female qualities are symbolic of the establishment of a harmony. Yet, since creation (and destruction) must continue, i.e., since harmony is just one side of the goddess' nature, her power is restored to her when she settles on earth.

3. The establishment of the goddess on earth in an anthropomorphic form

3.1. The goddess' expulsion from heaven

The goddess' wish having been fulfilled, Pārvatī seemingly enjoys her new status in the beautiful abode of Kailaṅkiri. It is a short-lived happiness, for, where Nārada appears, trouble is certain to follow. Myth 2 serves the purpose of depriving the goddess of her conjugal bliss in heaven and of bringing her back to earth, where she is needed by the people because it is the time of *kaliyukam*. A pretext has to be found, however flimsy, to find fault in Pārvatī's behaviour, so that the punishment - expelling her from heaven - may be justified. Once, the goddess closed Śiva's eyes in jest,and the whole world was plunged in darkness. To expiate this sin, the goddess was sent to Kāñcīpuram, where she lives as Kāmākṣī.[1] When Pārvatī once did not listen attentively enough to Śiva's exposition of the Veda, she had to become incarnate as Mīnākṣī, as daughter of a king who ruled over a town on the seashore.[2] As Akilāṇṭanāyaki, the goddess expiates her sin of having laughted while Śiva was meditating.[3] Devī's incarnations (the term used by informants was *avatāram*) on earth are often explained in terms of a fault, a sin committed by her. The

[1] Dessigane (1964), p. 83 ff., Kāñcip. (1910), ch. 63, l.20 ff., l.109 ff.

[2] Dessigane (1960), p. 88 ff., Tiruvil. *vacaṉam* (1961), p. 260 ff. (*valai vīciṉa paṭalam*).

[3] *Tiruvāṉaikkā tala varalāṟu (kōyil veḷiyīṭu)*, p. 3. Cf. O'Flaherty (1981-Śiva), p. 7: When Śiva does yoga his wife should be a *yoginī*.

punishment is separation from Śiva, a change of her status. Her status as the wife who is beside her husband is temporarily suspended (Śiva promises her that he will take her back, remarry her), her place in heaven has to be exchanged for a place on earth.

3.2. The goddess' settlement on earth.

'Oh Īśvara, my lord, where will I go, where will I stay? You cursed me to be alone in this *kaliyukam*, where will I go and where will I stay?' the goddess plaintively asks Śiva (Myth 2). Her fears are justified: she needs to eat (a primary concern of hers, it seems) and she needs a 'home', some sort of protection, for, a woman who travels alone, without husband or child, especially when she is young, is an easy prey for robbers; her life and reputation are at stake. This apart, her *tavam* and her worship of Śiva are a prerequisite for her re-union with her husband and for these she needs the proper place. Śiva indicates the place where Devī should settle: the goddess, in order to kill Vallālakantaṉ, had changed into her frightful form (*akōra rūpam*) and in this terrible aspect of hers, she might have destroyed the whole world. Kṛṣṇa, afraid that this might happen, had dug a deep pit and when the goddess had fallen into it, he had covered it with a rock. How did the goddess fall into that pit?

'All the gods and Muṉīcuvarar joined to make a huge chariot (*tēr*): The seven Ṛṣis formed the frame or body of the chariot, Ādiśeṣa was the axle, the four Veda the wheels, the 32 gods the decorative posts. Brahmā was the sacred pot (*kalacam*, Skt. *kalaśa*), Īśvara was the big umbrella and Mahāviṣṇu its pole. The Ammaṉ was made to sit on this chariot. Mahāviṣṇu explained: 'When we reach the North, I shall cut off the *kalacam* and then I shall fall down in Ceñci.[3] You gods, as soon as you hear the 'twang' sound as I cut off the *kalacam*, run away.' All the gods, as a huge chariot with the Ammaṉ sitting on top, travelled round and round, and when they arrived near Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, Viṣnu cut the *kalacam*, dropped himself in Ceñci. The other gods all ran off quickly and the Ammaṉ fell down - there at that spot where she became a termite hill. This chariot is called *Tiripuraratam*.'[2] (Rat.)

[1] Ceñci lies South of Malaiyaṉūr, about half way between Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and Tiṇṭivaṉam.

[2] Skt. *tripuraratha*.
Compare the famous chariot made for Śiva when he destroyed the triple

The goddess has to find that spot, to settle there as a termite hill. She journeys in a southern direction and on her way, wherever she stays, she establishes herself as one deity (*avatāram*) or another: Viśālākṣī in Kāśī, Kāmākṣī in Kāñcīpuram, Paccaiyamman in Vāḷapantal, Muttāḷamman in Tāyaṉūr and finally as Aṅkāḷamman in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr.

3.3. The goddess' forms.

She travels from one place to another in the form of a woman; a married woman to be sure - she will not be without her toe-ring,[1] one of the three signs which, according to the goddess, symbolize married status and auspiciousness and furthermore, she is almost always accompanied by her sons. Her sons (their names and number vary) fulfil a double function: they act as her guards and they emphasize her status as *cumaṅkali* (a married and fertile woman). (The whole idea that the goddess needs protection arises from the question of chastity *kaṟpu* - see below). In her human appearance there is nothing that distinguishes her from other women, although one of the robbers seems to sense that this woman is somehow different. On those who recognize her or help her, she bestows boons, to those who actively oppose her (as the robbers and the Cāṉār) she shows her power, she punishes them, but then blesses them.

It is not only as a *cumaṅkali* that the goddess appears to people. Sometimes, to gain the trust of people or to test them, she takes the guise of an old woman (*kiḻavi*) or a fortune-teller (*kuṟatti*). The old woman, an antithesis of the fertile married woman and the erotic virgin, can be said to occupy a peripheral place in society, especially if she is a widow.[2] This condition is shared by the fortune-teller, whose profession and status in society seem to place her beyond the well-defined social boundaries. The role of an old woman or of a fortune-teller gains the goddess easy access to towns and, as a fortune-teller especially,

city of the demons: O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 125 ff. and 325; Dessigane (1964), p. 37; Kāñcip. (1910), p. 117, l. 19 ff. (*kayilāyap-paṭalam*). According to popular belief, the axle of Śiva's chariot is said to have broken in Acciruppākkam, Kaṅkaṇṭa., p. 77.

[1] Married women in Tamilnadu generally wear toe-rings, usually on the second toe on each foot.

[2] See below, discussion of Myth 3 (Orrai.).

access to any member of society, even to the queen.[1] Furthermore, both roles contain an ambivalence to the extent that the old woman and the fortune-teller are socially of little importance and hardly taken notice of and thus serve best to conceal the true power of the deity, while at the same time, because of how they are regarded by society, certain powers may be attributed to them, especially powers involving sorcery.

Throughout the myths, the goddess' nature and form are ambiguous: she is married, yet without husband, a virgin, an old woman; she can be fierce and blood-thirsty or benign and beneficient; she wanders on earth as easily as she can visit the world of the gods, and she has as many names or *avatāram* as the story-teller could think of. We might then ask: 'Which, of all these deities, is Aṅkāḷammaṉ?' Posing this question to the story-teller, we get the familiar answer: 'All the goddesses are *avatāram* of Pārvatī, all goddesses are one.'[2] Just as the story-teller referred to the goddess in general as Ammaṉ or Īśvarī, so did the majority of the informants. An informant may talk about the 'Ammaṉ' and mean Aṅkāḷammaṉ and suddenly mention the 'Ammaṉ' but mean not Aṅkāḷammaṉ, but Māriyammaṉ or Pēcciyammaṉ. Which 'Ammaṉ' the informant has in mind depends largely on the context of the story he is relating. When he says 'Ammaṉ' it may be primarily the goddess as power, as Śakti which he is thinking of and only secondarily one particular goddess who can be distinguished from the others. In other words, Māriyammaṉ, for instance, is conceived of as both the nameless Śakti who absorbs within herself all goddesses and as a particular deity. Thus, as Śakti, she may be identified, among other goddesses, also with Aṅkāḷammaṉ, as we learn in the *Māriyammaṉ tālāṭṭu:*[3]

[1] Cf. Whitehead (1976), p. 131 and 137, the story of Ammavaru or Aṅkamma where the goddess also takes the guise of an old woman. Cf. Courtright, p. 3-4 (Śītalā's disguise is that of an old woman, a beggar woman), and p. 8: Śītalā as a widow and what this implies.

[2] Cf. Whitehead (1976), p. 31: 'They are only different names for the same goddesses.

[3] *Māriyammaṉ tālāṭṭu*, p. 44:

Malaiyaṉūr tāṉamarnta Mārik koluviruntāḷ
kaiccūlaṅ kapparaiyuṅ kaiyiṟ kapālamuṭaṉ
paccelumpu tiṉṟāl pāloḻuku meṉṟucolli
cuṭṭelumpu tiṉṟavaḷē cuṭalaivaṉaṅ kāttavaḷē
akkāḷun taṅkaiyarum aintiraṇṭēḻpērum
aintiraṇṭēḻpērum aṅkē koluviruntār
taṅkātu pēppilli taṉpēraic coṉṉavuṭaṉ
Aṅkāḷa Īsvariyum amarntu koluviruntār

Māri, you settled in Malaiyaṉūr and sit in state
holding the *cūlam*[1] and *kapparai*,[2] with the *kapālam* in your hand.
You eat the raw bones saying their juice flows out like milk.
You eat the burned bones, oh you who guard the cremation ground.
Elder sister and younger sister, 5 and 2, 7 people...
sit in state there.
When your name is spoken, malevolent spirits and sorcery vanish
Aṅkāḷa Īsvari...

As the goddess of a particular village, however, Māriyamman will be treated as distinct from Aṅkāḷamman; the time of her festivals, the ceremonies performed during the festival, her functions etc., will be different.[3]

3.3.1. The seven sisters.

Aṅkāḷamman and Māriyamman are often said to be two of altogether seven sisters, the identities of the other five varying according to place and informant. The *pūcāri* of the Pūkkuḷam temple (Tri-P.) listed the following seven sisters: 1. Kālī (the eldest), reigns over West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Northern Andhra Pradesh, 2. Bhagavatī, rules in Kerala, Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts of Tamilnadu, 3. Aṅkāḷa Paramēcuvari; she is in the other parts of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, 4. Māriyāyi (Māriyamman); she is specifically in Tamilnadu. The rest are: 5. Pēcci, 6. Caṭaicci and 7. Āṇṭicci. Another informant provided two lists: 1. Māri(yamman), the oldest, 2. Celliyamman, 3. Pārvatī, 4. Aḷañcāttā, 5. Aṅkāḷamman, 6. Vīrammā, 7. Kaṅkammā. To these he added the following two: Āravaḷḷi and Ettiyammā. The second list was composed of the following goddesses: 1. Karumāri, 2. Aṅkāḷa Paramēcuvari, 3. Muttumāri, 4. Celliyamman, 5. Ponniyamman, 6. Aḷañcāttā and 7. Muḷuṅkalāttā. (Tinti. (2))[4]

We see that the lists are arbitrary arrangements of goddesses known to the informant. The informant of Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, a well-educated man, named as the first four goddesses those most generally considered to be of importance in a particular area of India, whereas the last three were

[1] Skt. *śūla*, the *triśūla*

[2] *kapparai* - 'beggar's bowl' - its meaning and function see Ch. III A.5.1.

[3] See Beck (1972), p. 54 ff. and 99 ff.

[4] Eight or nine sisters are equally common. Cf. e.g., Sontheimer (1981), p. 119 and 122.

purely local deities. The informant of Tiṇṭivaṉam listed just about any goddess he could think of, including Pārvatī. Although most informants may be familiar with the concept 'seven sisters', very few informants will understand this concept as something which has to be given a particular form; in other words, the notion that Aṅkāḷammaṉ is one of seven sisters bears a certain importance, but who these sisters are is largely irrelevant. Each informant will fill the grid 'seven sisters' according to his own knowledge. Names or forms, in the mind of the informant, often play a much smaller role compared to idea or content. Thus, according to one informant, the name 'Pārvatī' can fit the idea 'seven sisters'; in another informant's mind 'Pārvatī' fits in content Kālī[1] (in the sense Kālī is generally understood by western scholarship). To a third informant, 'Pārvatī' signifies Gaurī, the benevolent goddess married to Śiva.

As we have seen in the myths, Īśvarī, Pārvatī, Ammaṉ are terms which are interchangeable; however, they are interchangeable only when they are based on one and the same idea, just as Māriyammaṉ and Aṅkāḷammaṉ are interchangeable when thought of as Śakti. Two more examples will illustrate this:

The Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple in Viḻuppuram is actually a Māriyammaṉ temple. Thirty years ago a shrine for Aṅkāḷammaṉ was built in the back of the Māriyammaṉ temple compound. However, even before Aṅkāḷammaṉ was installed, the festival in Māci (Feb.-March) for Aṅkāḷammaṉ was celebrated. Since at that time there was no statue (*mūrtti*, Skt. *mūrti*) for Aṅkāḷammaṉ, the *pūcāri* (a Cempaṭavar) changed Māriyammaṉ (she is in the main shrine facing the entrance) into Aṅkāḷammaṉ for the period of the festival. On the one hand, the identification of the two goddesses with each other (i.e., both being Śakti) made it possible to use one and the same *mūrtti* for both goddesses; on the other hand, since they *are* different goddesses, Māriyammaṉ *had* to be changed into Aṅkāḷammaṉ for the festival. This change was especially necessary because the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*, a ritual typically performed for Aṅkāḷammaṉ, is, as a rule, never performed for Māriyammaṉ.

In the myths the goddess becomes Aṅkāḷammaṉ when she settles (*amar*) in Malaiyaṉūr. There, she bestows her blessings on the inland fishermen, the Cempaṭavar, who make her their clan goddess (*kula teyvam*, Skt.

[1] see below, ch. III. A.3.1.

kuladeva, -devī). Myth 11 explains the origin of the fishermen's name and of their profession, as well as why Pārvatī-Aṅkāḷamman is their daughter and mother.[1] In this particular myth Aṅkāḷamman fits the concept 'Pārvatī' (Pārvatī as daughter of Himavat, i.e., Malaiyaracan or Parvatarājan, and married to Śiva), but as a *kannipurru* Aṅkāḷamman can hardly pass as Pārvatī, nor does Aṅkāḷamman's role as midwife to Niśāsinī agree with this concept of Pārvatī.

3.4. The chaste goddess; the theme of union and separation.

This dichotomy, of being married on the one hand and remaining a virgin on the other hand, seems to be emphasized in the character of Tamil goddesses. This double aspect of the goddess expresses two important and well-known themes in Hinduism in general and in Tamil literature in particular: union and separation. Union, the fusion of the male and female, the meeting of the lovers, the absorption of the soul in god, the ideal to be achieved, is opposed to the separation of the male and female, of the lovers and of the individual soul/devotee from god. Marriage, as much as it symbolizes the union, the ultimate state of one-ness, the identification of the one with the other, implies a commitment to the achievement of that union, for, although the marriage may have taken place, the wish for the union may yet to be fulfilled. The devotee ties himself to god in a spiritual marriage, he commits himself to a 'life' with god, yet he will feel separated from the god until the marriage has been consummated, so to speak. We think of Āṇṭāḷ who took the god Raṅganātha of Śrīraṅgam as her spouse[2] or of Mahādēviyakkā who considered herself married to Śiva.[3]

The married status of the goddess points towards the goal: the union. The goddess' foremost wish is to become the left side of Śiva. Union (*puṇartal*) in Tamil poetry is associated with the *kuṟiñci tiṇai* (the landscape of the mountain area) and often portrays a first or secret meeting of the lovers before marriage or a re-union of lovers. The love which precedes this union is an energetic, expecting type of love, the kind our goddess may well experience when she thinks of her husband. One of

[1] see below, ch. II, 'Cempaṭavar'.

[2] Zvelebil (1974), p. 103; Varadachari (1970), p. 133.

[3] Ramanujan (1973), p. 111 ff.

the narrators of the above myths (Mal. (1)) pointed out that the goddess' first marriage was only a make-belief and that the actual wedding ceremony would take place later, when the goddess would be reunited with Śiva. Just as the heroine of the Tamil poems, set in the *kuṟiñci* landscape, meets her lover secretly at night[1] or elopes with her lover, so does Aṅkāḷammaṉ have a clandestine meeting with her lover, Śiva, once a year in Kīḻākkuḷam:

During the ten days of the *makācivaṉrāttiri* (*mahāśivarātri*) festival, the Ammaṉ (Aṅkāḷammaṉ) is said to do *tavam*. On the tenth day of the festival, during the fourth *cāmam*[2] (i.e., between 3 and 6 AM) Śiva appears on earth and elopes with the goddess. The scenario is as follows: In front of the sanctum, close to the flag post, in the area between the sanctum and the sacrificial stone (*pali pīṭam*, Skt. *bali* + *pīṭha*), a small *maṇṭapam* is built. The area is called Kailāsa. Into the *maṇṭapam* are placed a statue of Vināyaka, a *liṅkam* and a stone representing the *yoni* (*āvuṭaiyāḷ*). (The Ammaṉ is said to face North, i.e., towards Kailāsa.) A twelve yard sari or screen is tied around the area in which the three gods sit. In the middle of the area there is a lamp. When Śiva appears (in the fourth *cāmam*), a shadow, a darkness will cross the light - that is the moment when Śiva visits the goddess. This ceremony represents Śiva's abduction of Dakṣa's daughter, and the consequences of this act lead to Dakṣa's sacrifice.[3]

The goddess' first union with her lover is followed by her desire for a second union, a re-union, a desire which accompanies her during her time of separation. During this time the goddess considers herself married; her marriage symbols and her children point to the ideal status of women on earth, the married woman (the *cumaṅkali*), especially the one with plenty of sons. As much as this form is an important aspect of the goddess, the emphasis is on her virgin, husbandless state. The married goddess may represent an ideal, however, as such she does not possess the effective power which the unmarried

[1] Hart (1979), p. 110 (Ak. 22).

[2] Day and night are each divided into four *cāmam* of three hours each, starting with sunrise and sunset, i.e., 1. *cāmam* from 6 to 9 PM, 2. *cāmam* from 9 to 12 PM, etc.

[3] The goddess is not considered married to Śiva. Śiva is present in the temple only as one of the many gods that make up the goddess' retinue. This ritual involves other elements, which see under *alaku niṟuttal*, ch. III.D.4.

goddess has. We saw that she had to relinquish her powers in order to get married, furthermore, as wife of Śiva, the goddess is thought of as inhabiting Kailāsa, but her devotees require her to be on earth in order to help them. There are two reasons why the goddess is ordered to go live on earth: a) because she did something to offend her husband and b) because it is *kaliyukam*, a time when gods have to be sent to earth in order to set things right. The goddess, who has become tainted herself, has to expiate her wrong (*pāvam*) on earth, while being at the same time the means by which her devotees expiate their sins. While she balances out her own *karma*, she has to absorb that of her devotees and in doing so, she will regain her place beside Śiva and will help her devotees to gain their place beside him (or her). In order to fulfil this role, she needs power. This she has by virtue of being a virgin again, by being the chaste woman engaged in *tavam*. George L. Hart III[1] has shown how, in the early Tamil poems (of the anthologies), the chastity (*karpu*) of a woman was equated with power (*anaṅku*) and this power resided especially in her breasts. This power will of course increase, if the woman, despite a long absence from her husband/lover, remains chaste; famous examples are Kannaki or Sītā. Zvelebil notes about Sītā: 'The one leading feature of her character is her unwavering firmness in remaining 'the jewel of chastity' (*karpiṉukkani*) and faithfulness.'[2] A truly chaste woman, according to the Tamil ideal, is one who will never enter the heart of another man,[3] in other words, she will in no way give another man a cause to think of her as in the least bit unfaithful. Should she even for a second waver in the steadfastness towards her husband, her chastity is lost and with it, her power. As the example of Reṇukā illustrates, a woman who has once strayed from the path of faithfulness cannot return to it. The Cakkilicci, whose body Reṇukā gets, is a girl that has just reached puberty. Reṇukā - now Māriyammaṉ - is a virgin again, unmarried. Only in this way can the boon that her chastity be restored be fulfilled. In the *Kāñcippurāṇam*[4] Reṇukā, after having been resuscitated, is punished for her lack of faithfulness by being exiled from her caste. Though the episode

[1] Hart (1973) - 'Woman and the Sacred in Ancient Tamilnad'.

[2] Zvelebil (1974), p. 150 ff.

[3] *Maṇimēkalai* (1976) 22.46: *maṇṭiṇi ñālattu maḷaivaḷam tarūum*
peṇṭirāyiṉ, piṟarneñcu pukāar

[4] Kāñcip. (1910), *irēṇukīccarappaṭalam*; cf. Dessigane (1964), p. 60-61.

with the exchange of the heads between her and a low-caste woman is absent in this *purāṇa* (Reṇukā gets back her own head, but becomes later a widow!), she receives the boon from Śiva to become a goddess worshipped by low-caste people (*iḻikulattuḷḷār*).[1]

A chaste woman can use her power to benefit others (she can cause abundant rain to fall),[2] but she can also employ it for a destructive purpose, as Kannaki used her power to destroy Madurai. Aṅkālammaṉ, as separated from Śiva, as the chaste woman, is full of power. Her power is evident throughout the myths; notice that she has the third eye again (myth 9) and the mantra, two of her symbols of power which she had to hand over to Śiva. When the need arises, Aṅkālammaṉ exhibits all the signs of a dangerous, destructive deity (in myth 3 she tears the foetus from the queen's womb; in myth 12 she crushes the skull under her foot). The *akōra*, terrifying side of the goddess reminds us of Koṟṟavai, the goddess who in the *Cilappatikāram* is associated with the *pālai tiṇai* (the landscape of the desert, or the mountain and forest region during the heat of the summer),[3] the *tiṇai* which has as its love theme the separation (*pirital, pirivu*) of the lovers. The myths contain many images which fit the *pālai tiṇai*: when the goddess loses her toe-ring, she burns the crops and turns the fertile field into a desert (myth 6); cacti and thorny bushes grow alongside the lake and the little bit of water which is in the lake, she causes to disappear when the Cāṉār refuse to give toddy to her thirsty children (myth 9); in the forest she meets robbers (Maṟavar[4] - myth 8), and finally Aṅkāḷammaṉ is the deity of the *pālai* or *kāṭu*, of the cremation ground (myth 12).

The various levels on which the informant perceives his deity 'Aṅkālammaṉ' are in no correlation with the particular names he gives the deity, nor are these levels always clearly distinguished in his mind. They are superimposed on each other and, when the need arises, one or the other level will take precedence over the others. The image of the goddess on the first level, is that of the all-encompassing female deity, Devī or Śakti. All goddesses fit into this concept. On the second level, Aṅkālammaṉ is the goddess married to Śiva, the goddess who 'lives' on Kailāsa. In this aspect Aṅkālammaṉ's creative and

[1] Kāñcip. (1910), *irēṇukīccarappaṭalam*, verse 32.

[2] *Maṇimēkalai* (1976), 22.46.

[3] Tolkāppiyam distinguishes only four landscapes, the *pālai tiṇai* being the *mullai* and *kuṟiñci* landscapes when they are scorched by the summer heat. See Balasubramanian (1980), p. 171.

[4] For Maṟavar, also Eyiṉar, and *pālai*, cf. Cilap. (1968), canto XII; *Kuṟuntokai* (1961), 12, p. 20 and Ramanujan (1967), p. 24; *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* line 123 ff., in: Chelliah (1946), p. 87 ff.

destructive qualities are negligible or subdued. On the third level, Aṅkāḷammaṉ as virgin, these qualities are brought out in full force. Here she is on earth and fully occupied with her devotees' problems, problems arising from life on earth.

4. The manifestation of the goddess in a non-anthropomorphic form.

Apart from the above mentioned three levels, a fourth level can be distinguished. It is Aṅkāḷammaṉ before she is recognized as a goddess, it is the power which manifests itself in an extraordinary way. This power is as yet without attributes, it may be male or female or both, it may be benevolent or malevolent or both. It is the moving force behind some event, before that force has revealed its name or identity.

4.1. The termite hill

As we have seen, Aṅkāḷammaṉ reveals her presence in Malaiyaṉūr in the shape of a termite hill and a snake living therein. Termite hills which contain gods are fairly common, at least in the central and southern parts of India. To give but a few examples:

In Tiruveṟkāṭu the goddess Ampikai was in the shape of a termite hill.[1] In Madras there is a shrine to Nākammaṉ who lives in a termite hill.[2] In Mēl Maruvūr near Acciṟupākkam the Ādi Parāśakti is said to have appeared from a termite hill as *svayambhū* snake (pāmpu).[3] In the town of Bellary Durgammā is worshipped as a termite hill.[4] In Tiruvārūr Śiva is lord of the termite hill (Valmīkanātha).[5] The Baiga god Bara Deo lived first in a termite hill.[6] Khandobā is associated with the termite hill and Mhaskobā lived as snake in the termite hill.[7] We may also think of the *liṅkam* in the termite hill and of the sages who do *tavam* in termite hills.[8] Snakes, independently of termite hills, are worshipped throughout India, and some may become famous deities as, for instance, Manasā, the snake goddess of Bengal.[9] The termite hill

[1] Kankanta. (1977), p. 14

[2] ibid. p. 74-75.

[3] ibid. p. 77.

[4] Whitehead (1976), p. 74.

[5] Shulman (1980), p. 110.

[6] Elwin (1939), p. 56

[7] Sontheimer (1976), p. 183 ff.

[8] Shulman (1980), p. 90 ff.; Mackenzie Manuscripts (1972), Vol. I, Section 9, Account of Pūṇḍi in the Arni district.

[9] Smith (1976).

deity or the snake deity can be either male or female.[1] For an in-depth study on the mythology and cult of the termite hill in India, I refer the reader to Ditte König, *Das Tor zur Unterwelt, Mythologie und Kult des Termitenhügels in der schriftlichen und mündlichen Tradition Indiens.*[2] The snake, as we shall see, often serves as a means of communication between the goddess and the devotee. Apart from the Malaiyanūr temple, many other Aṅkālamman̲ temples contain termite hills and snakes, often these termite hills are not inside the sanctum and are treated as subsidiary deities (Mdr.Culai; Venk.).

In the following story, the sacred site is also marked by a termite hill, but before this happens, another event takes place which makes it clear that a deity demands attention:

> 'In a house the women were pounding millet (*kampu*) in a large mortar (*ural*). Suddenly they saw blood spurting out from it, and they cried out: 'What is this, we are pounding millet and suddenly this blood spurts out!' That night everyone was afraid, and at midnight the goddess came and said: 'I am Malaiyanūr Aṅkāla-paramēcuvari. When I came to this place (Teli), the madness (*veri*) left me;[3] now I want to stay here. You have to keep me here and praise me and look after me.' This she made known through the potter of the village. The next morning, when they came to this place, they found a terrific (*akōramān̲a*) termite mound. That is the place where the temple was built.' (Teli)

The flowing blood merely indicates that a source of power has become manifest, a power which could be either a malevolent or a benevolent spirit; the people, therefore, become afraid because they do not immediately perceive the phenomenon as a good omen.

4.2. The grinding stone

The appearance of a termite mound, though it marks the site of a deity, need not necessarily signify that deity's initial manifestation in a particular village or area,[4] nor does the goddess make

[1] Cf. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (1980).

[2] See especially chapter 5.

[3] The madness refers to Myth 12: in many versions the *kapālam* gets stuck onto the goddess' hand, and she gets possessed by madness.

[4] e.g., Vālājāpeṭṭai: before the termite hill appeared, there was already a temple for the goddess at a different site.

her presence known exclusively by appearing as a termite hill. Rātapuram is a village to the west of Tiruvannamālai. The Aṅkālamman temple lies at the outskirts of the village, close to the main road. It is a brick structure and badly in need of repair. The temple and the temple services are in the charge of the Cempatavar community. Aṅkālamman is their lineage goddess (*kula teyvam*). How did the temple start, what sign did the goddess give to make her presence known? The *pūcāri* (informant (1)) relates:

> 'At the beginning our work was to catch fish, and that of our women to sell dried fish. The women would put the dried fish in the basket and go around the villages selling it. Once a woman was thus going around the villages, when suddenly her basket got very heavy. She thought: 'What is this, first the basket was so light, now suddenly it is so heavy!' She took the basket down from her head and looked inside. Inside the basket was a *kuḻavi* (the roller part of a set of grinding stones). The woman threw the stone out, put the basket back onto her head and continued to the next village. Again, the basket suddenly became very heavy. She looked inside it and found the same *kuḻavi* stone in the basket. She threw it out and went on her way. But the basket got heavy again and this time the woman decided to take the stone home and to show it to her husband. The husband said: 'Okay, let us leave the stone here tonight and see (what will happen).' At night the stone appeared to the husband and said: 'I came with your wife for company's sake, but she turned me out of the basket. Now that I am here, isn't it your duty to give me some gruel (*kañci kiñci*[1]). I am here now, so if you build a platform (*mēṭai*) for me and place me on it, I shall protect you.' So the fisherman placed the *kuḻavi* on the site where the temple is now.'[2]

(This fisherman is one of the informant's ancestors, but the informant was not able to remember which one.) The stone or goddess kept appearing

[1] *kiñci* is the echo word; i.e., 'gruel or something similar'.

[2] Cf. Thurston (1909 C&T), Vol. VII, p. 196, 'Tottiyan' for exactly the same theme. Cf. Beck (1972), p. 92: a stone is in the basket belonging to Nātār and is thrown away several times. The stone is a god who saves the Nātār family by fighting off a *muṇi* ('frightening giant'). The same theme of a god following a man to his house is also known to the Saoras (Thurston, C&T: 'Savaras'), cf. Elwin (1955), p. 412: the god Gadalsum (the god of grass-cutters) says: 'I was looking after my grass, and since I was all alone and hungry I followed this man home. I want a house and some food.' Here the god who has followed the man is the cause of the man's illness.

in dreams of people; she would then help them in one way or another and they, in turn, built the temple for her. (See below, chapter II).

In the same form Aṅkāḷammaṉ got herself established in Veṅkampūr: 'A thousand Ceṭṭiyār families used to live in Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam.[1] The ruling king wished to marry a girl from one of these families. Her father, rather than give his daughter to a man of another caste, decided to leave the city with his family. They packed all their belongings onto the bullock carts and left the city at night. At that time Aṅkāḷammaṉ said: 'Why are you leaving me here?' and she joined them as a *kuḻavi* stone. Saying: 'There is no justice here anymore,' she went along with them. After a while, they rested, put up camp, cooked their food and used the *kuḻavi*. When they started their journey again, they left the *kuḻavi* behind. When they stopped for the second time, the *kuḻavi* was there again. So it happened a few times: they would leave the stone behind, but at every stop it was there again. Thus they travelled for a long time through desert-like landscapes, until they arrived at this place (Veṅkampūr). One person received the grace (*arul*) of the Ammaṉ (i.e., the goddess took possession of him) and the Cāmi (the goddess) spoke through that person: 'This here is a cool place, why don't you leave me here and why don't you all settle here.' And so it happened that Aṅkāḷammaṉ became established here.'[2]

The fact that the goddess chooses to show herself in one or the other of the important household utensils might have something to do with her being a *kula* deity, one who belongs to a family or lineage, as opposed to a deity who presides over a whole village. One devotee of Aṅkāḷammaṉ related that his family (Teluṅku Ācāri) worships for three days during Tīpāvaḷi a *mūrtti* of the goddess made with the *ammikkal* (grinding stone). In the home the stone is covered with turmeric paste, a face with eyes is modeled and the whole decorated with jewellery.[3]

[1] The ancient sea-port and capital of the Cōḻa kingdom (TL).

[2] This was supposed to have happened 200 to 300 years ago. The informant, the *pūcāri*, belongs to the Cōḻiya Veḷḷāḷar caste. Apparently two sisters of one of the Ceṭṭiyār families had taken over the priestly duties for the goddess, and when they had grown old, they had handed the work over to a young boy of the Cōḻiya Veḷḷāḷar caste, an ancestor of the present *pūcāri*. A number of similar stories about the Ceṭṭiyār exist; see e.g., Beck (1972), p. 36 ff.

[3] Information from: T. Naraciṅka Ācāri, Cūḷai.

What strikes us about these stories is that the goddess is not exactly treated like the royal guest, as we might expect she would be treated. Only her obstinate pursuit finally leads to her recognition. It seems to take more than a simple 'miracle' to convince her people that she is truly among them, not just as a clan goddess whom one might think of and worship in thought, but as a real tangible entity with as many needs as her people. In establishing a deity, that is, in recognizing the deity as living or appearing in a particular place, the community undertakes a relationship which not only requires entrance into the complex system of offering worship and *pūcai* and of conducting festivals, but also imposes a sometimes considerable burden on the community in the form of certain financial and 'moral' responsibilities.

4.3. Moving the goddess from one place to another.

Not all families which leave their village to settle in another place take a *mūrtti* of their goddess with them. The family might take a handful of earth (or a piece of the termite hill, if there is one) from the temple with them and use this as a starting point for a new place of worship, a shrine or a temple in their new village. Often, especially if the family is small and poor, they will not consecrate a new place of worship in their new village, but will rather visit their old village when they feel the need to offer *pūcai* to their goddess (this will be during the festival time or for specific life-cycle rites such as earboring, wedding etc.). Sometimes the goddess or the gods (there may be up to 21, especially around the Maturai area) will be brought along in a box by the migrating family, that is, if the gods are in a movable form, i.e., of wood or metal, or small stones (Nattam, Kamp.). It is no mystery that the gods should be in a box; in some cases, the box may be their living quarters for most of the time: the Aṅkāḷamman temple of Civarakkōṭṭai consists of various small platforms; there are no *mūrtti* on these. The gods (there are 21) are kept in a box and only taken out during festival times. The following story from Periyakulam shows how a new temple may be established with some sacred elements from another temple and how the goddess designates the site on which she wishes to be established:

'Four or five generations ago, my forefathers went to Mēl Malaiyanūr and from there they brought a box which contained a sari, a bell and other things used for *pūcai*. They brought the box on a bullock. This bullock walked for three days and nights without ever resting. Finally, when the bullock arrived at this spot - where the temple is now - it lay down and the box (the Ammaṉ) said to the men: 'This is where I want to be. You have to place me here.'

The central theme of these accounts is the goddess' desire to make herself known to people and to get established in a place. A place does not only mean a particular spot, although certain signs, such as the appearance of a termite hill or the sudden laying down of the bullocks, may be taken as the deity's expression of her preference for a precise location, but a place also signifies a belonging to a community, to a group of people. The following describes what happens when the goddess falls into the hands of the 'wrong' community. The statue of Aṅkālaparamēcuvari of Vālacapāt was first in a Brahmin's house:

'The Brahmin did not know that the statue was Aṅkālaparamēcuvari. A man from the 'colony' (i.e., the Harijan quarters) was at that time working in the Brahmin's house. The children of the Brahmin were playing with the figure of the Ammaṉ. When the Harijan saw this, he thought: 'These children play with this figure, let our children play with it!' and he took the statue to the colony. Before, the Ammaṉ had been in a clean house; when she was in the colony she brought difficulties to the people. Some got diarrhoea, some were vomiting. Dead bodies started to accumulate in the colony. Then the Ammaṉ took possession of a sixty year old woman and through her made all the people assemble. Then the Ammaṉ said: 'First I was in the Brahmin's house, then you placed me here, now, unless you put me in the place where I belong, these diseases will continue. Unless you bring me there, I will 'sweep you off' in great numbers.' Then she told the people in whose house she was located. All the people of the colony got together and took the Ammaṉ to a well and placed her into it. Then, one of the Nāṭṭār[1] (of our community) got possessed and

[1] Nāṭṭār is a title of the Cempaṭavar.

the Nāttār took the statue out of the well and installed it opposite of where it is now. They made a small thatch-roofed shrine. Then they fixed a date in the month of Māci (Feb.-March) for the *mayānakkollai*, brought a handful of earth (*man*) from Malaiyanūr and consecrated the statue. This was 136 years ago.'

4.4. The concept of '*cāmi*'

The first manifestation of the deity in an object (the grinding stone, the termite hill etc.) is a sign that some power, force or spirit has chosen to make itself known. Until it has been found out who the power is (usually through somebody's dream or by means of possession), it is nameless, without attributes and sexless. The deity, before it is named, could be likened to the box which floats down the river: the box portends a divine object, and whoever finds the box may put a claim on it and its content.

'A Tēvar and a Nāyakkar were at the river. They saw a box floating down the river and both caught hold of it. A fight ensued over the ownership of the box and to settle the matter, they drew lots. The Tēvar would get the contents, the Nāyakkar the box. Since the box was locked, the nearby washerman was asked to guard the box, while the Tēvar and the Nāyakkar went to fetch the Aiyar priest and an Ācāri to open the box. Inside the box was the idol of Aṅkālamman. The Tēvar took the idol to his side of the village, the Nāyakkar took a handful of earth from where the box had lain and with this established a temple in his part of the village.[1]

The concept of an as yet unspecified deity can best be described by the term *cāmi*. A *cāmi* can be any deity regardless of its sex, shape or locality and if a person does not know a deity's name, he will simply call it *'cāmi'*. Since there is not necessarily a correlation between

[1] I owe this story to Mr. K. Cinnappa, Asst. Prof. of Tamil at the Tamil Sangam in Maturai. Mr. Cinnappa was at the time (1981) doing a study on the 'little' deities of the Tirumaṅkalam Taluk of Madurai district. The village this story pertains to is Nēcanēri.
The goddess enclosed in a box is a common theme. Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 197 ff. - The villagers of Śāntakovvūr (Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh) related a similar story about their village goddess Aṅkālamman: The goddess had floated on the waters of the river until she reached the village boundary. There she stayed. Her fame spread. A quarrel between the villages ensued over the 'ownership' of the goddess. The goddess disappeared. Later, the villagers of Śāntakovvūr found her in the river and could therefore claim her as their village goddess.

a deity's sex and function, i.e., male gods can have the same function as goddesses (e.g., granting children, fertility); and since both male and female deities receive basically the same type of offerings, the deity's name is often the only indication of its sex (if the deity is in a non-anthropomorphic form).[1]

Malaiyaracaṉ[2] realizes that the termite hill he had ordered destroyed is more than an ordinary termite hill, he senses that he is dealing with some extraordinary power, but who that '*cāmi*' may be, he does not know. Only the fishermen, to whom the goddess had revealed herself as the termite hill, know. The concept of Aṅkāḷammaṉ as *cāmi* can be compared to her image as Ādi Parāśakti. The latter is the undifferentiated power inherent in all that is, but veiled, while the former is the power unveiled, made manifest. Both are sexless or androgynous (the demons that emerge from the termite hill to swallow the ditch diggers are male and female demons).

Once the *cāmi* is named, it inherits all the attributes attached to its new image. This 'named' image, i.e., the deity as Aṅkāḷammaṉ, is a fluid image, one subject to changes. Aṅkāḷammaṉ of the myths is well established in the śaiva tradition: great stress is laid on making her Śiva's wife. Most informants' concept of Aṅkāḷammaṉ will include the notion that Aṅkāḷammaṉ is a śaiva deity and thus identifiable with Pārvatī. But this mythic image of Aṅkāḷammaṉ changes when we look at the goddess from the point of view of the ritual or when we see her as the individual goddess of a particular place. We shall see that in the 'ritual' image of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Śiva plays a very minor or no role at all, just as Śiva finds no place in the goddess' sanctum, except as a guard or as a child of Aṅkāḷammaṉ.

Recalling to mind the four levels on which the devotee perceives the goddess, and using them as a framework within which the devotee forms his image of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, we see that he emphasizes one level (or aspect) and leaves out another, and furthermore we see that this selection of levels is not constant, but depends on whether he sees the goddess in a general sense, or if he sees her in the light of a particular moment.

[1] A famous male deity whom hundreds of women worship every Tuesday and Friday, mostly for children, and to whom they offer goats and chickens, is Pāṉṭi near Maturai.

[2] Myth 10.

The four levels describe a narrowing or widening of the concept, from the least specific to the most specific, from the universal to the local:

Śakti	- universe
Married goddess	- kailāsa (heaven)
Virgin goddess	- earth
Cāmi (termite hill, snake, etc.)	- village (specific location), also nether-world, world of spirits and ancestors.

5. The goddess' function

In another variant (Mdr.Culai) of the ant myth (myth 2), Pārvatī, who had doubted Śiva's ability to feed all living creatures, does not get sent to earth to atone for her sin. Instead, Śiva advises her that if she wants to reduce the heat in her body produced by her sin (her mistrust), she should create a big garden, a shady cool place wherein the pilgrims who go from Kāśī to Rāmēsvaram may rest.[1] Pārvatī's heat (sin) is reduced by offering a cool place to people on earth. The goddess' pivotal role is to make her power available to her devotees, so that they may benefit from it.

We have seen that two of the goddess' preoccupations are shelter and food: when Pārvatī is turned out of Kailāsa, her first worry is about a place to stay (myth 2); when Reṇukā is changed into Māriyamman̲, her immediate concern is about food (myth 5); when Māriyamman̲ pays a visit to her brother to grace him with a few of her pearls, it is food she demands; and when Aṅkālamman̲ has finally found her place on the twelve and one half *kāni* land, she wants to know what kind of offerings and *pūcai* people shall give her (myth 11). If the goddess needs to be established in a place, it is because she has to fulfil her function, and she can only do that when her power is recognized, when she is worshipped. Her very existence depends on the worship of her devotees. The gods tell Māriyamman̲ to put the pox pearl on people and when she has given them the pox, they will offer her food (myth 5). Her hunger has to be appeased and she will make her desire known by putting her

[1] This garden is guarded by Kāttavarāyan̲.

mark on people. This in itself is a form of grace, for the person thus struck by the goddess is said to be possessed by her.[1] When the offering has been made to the goddess, she will remove the disease. The goddess' presence on earth, as such, and her active demonstration of her power in particular (causing disease, punishing an offense etc.), constitute an invitation to man to acknowledge and make use of her power. She offers her power in return for recognition and devotion. If she is treated properly, that is, given offerings and devotion, her power will benefit her devotees and it will increase; if she is ignored, her power may harm her devotees and it may decrease. (More of this later). Her function then, simply speaking, is to make her power, i.e., herself, available, so that people may enter into a relationship with her through which they may gain that which they regard as important in their lives (be it wealth, children, protection, *moksa* etc.).

As a *kula teyvam* the goddess' function includes the protection of the particular family or caste group which has adopted or inherited her. The Cempaṭavar claim that Aṅkāḷammaṉ was born into their family (myth 11), that she is their daughter, but much more than a daughter, Aṅkāḷammaṉ is worshipped as a mother (*tāy*), and the fishermen call themselves her children. In songs to her, appeal is frequently made to her grace (*aruḷ*), to her ability to chase away disease and to destroy the *karma* of her devotees. She accepts, as devotees, even those who are ignorant and thus she gains merit (*puṇṇiyam*).[2] Like a mother who protects and loves her children, the goddess cannot be indifferent towards her devotees. To help them to destroy their *karma*, to enjoy the fruits of her devotees' sins, that is her role on earth, that is her atonement for her own wrongdoing (myth 2).

What particular kind of function Aṅkāḷammaṉ has depends on her 'ritual' character or image; in turn, the effectiveness of her power hinges on the performance of the appropriate rituals. The goddess'

[1] Cf. Manndorff (1960): 'Sie (Māramma) gilt als die Göttin der Pocken, aber auch andere Epidemien werden mit ihr in Zusammenhang gebracht. Wer immer von dieser Krankheit befallen wird, der ist von Māramma besessen. Dies gilt als eine Art Auszeichnung. Das pockennarbige Gesicht kennzeichnet den Menschen auf Lebenszeit, dass Māramma einmal von ihm Besitz ergriffen hat.' (p. 17).
Cf. Jain (1973), p. 157-160: Hitara, the pox goddess of the Mina (Southern Rajasthan) is specifically asked to appear in her form as pox in the body of children. The belief is that only those children (particularly boys) who thus have been graced by the goddess are mature and ready to get married.

[2] See ch. V, *patikam*, verse 5.

functions or the spheres her protective power include and the rituals which are geared to make that power available and to maintain it are the characteristic traits of Aṅkāḷamman, those which make her different from Māriyamman and other goddesses. What these are, will be discussed in chapter III.

6. Conclusions

We have seen how the Ādiśakti, an erotic virgin charged with dangerous power, was put out of battle, tricked by her husband into turning her power over to him, as she was tricked again in the dance contest:

> 'Once Śiva and Śakti wanted to have a competition to see who had more power. They decided upon a dance competition. They danced both equally well. Visnu wished that Śiva should lose, so he caused one of Śiva's earrings to fall on the ground. But Śiva picked up the earring with his foot and brought it back onto his ear. Pārvatī felt too shy to imitate that movement and so Śiva won the contest.' (Mdr.Culai)[1]

As his wife, the goddess has to be submissive, totally devoted to her lord. Like a devotee who through his lack of faith in his god is left to fend for himself, so is Pārvatī, through her lack of trust, punished by being separated from her lord. Moreover, it is *kaliyukam*, a time when the goddess has to enter in contact with humans. She manifests herself on earth through an extraordinary or unnatural event. The power thus made manifest is recognized as a deity; the goddess reveals her name. A virgin, yet married, alone, yet with a husband, the ambivalent goddess rules; sometimes she shows her friendly face, sometimes her terrible one. Her power is needed, and because it is needed, people control it through a system of offerings and appeasements.

We have seen how the devotee's concept of the goddess contains different levels, all of which are intervowen into a whole. She may

[1] Compare Shulman (1980), p. 214-216.

be a power without sex or name, a *cāmi*, like the snake or the termite hill. The power as such is uncontrolled, it can appear anywhere, any time and in a variety of forms. On another level the power is named, identified and circumscribed. Aṅkāḷamman is a female deity, settled in a particular place (or places) and worshipped by particular people who perform specific rituals for her. On another plane the goddess is identified with the benign, kindly wife of Śiva, the ideal beyond earthen boundaries and finally, she is also the female principle, *śakti* and the Śakti, the goddess *per se*.

II. TEMPLES, ICONOGRAPHY AND CASTES.

A. Temples and Iconography.

In the last chapter we looked at the goddess' image in the myths. In the following pages we want to give the reader an idea of Aṅkāḷamman's material image and of her residence, the temple.

1. The Temple (*kōvil* or *kōyil*).

The first question we may ask is: how do temples get built? Not every village, not every community is wealthy enough to have a temple built for their goddess. Often it is only through generous donations from wealthy persons that a temple, or even only a part thereof, can be constructed. We saw how Aṅkāḷammaṉ came to the Cempaṭavar in Rāṭāpuram in the form of a grinding stone (*kuḻavi*). Here is how she managed to have a temple built for herself:

> 'The Ammaṉ used to appear in people's dreams and tell them to do this and that and so a temple was built for her. There was a Paṇṭāram from Alappaṉūr, a Kavuṇṭar; the Ammaṉ appeared in this Paṇṭāram's dream and said: 'I am here without a house and I find it difficult. What's the use of your staying in a fort (*kōṭṭai*), why don't you build me something.' He asked: 'Where?' 'In Rāṭāpuram,' she said. So the Paṇṭāram came to Rāṭāpuram and built a temple. He used to come here on a horse. He would leave the horse outside the temple, go inside, break a coconut, tell the Ammaṉ his wishes, and she would take care of him. One day she said: 'Wherever you go, I have to go as well, so why don't you make a horse for me.' Then the Paṇṭāram had a horse vehicle (*vākaṉam*, Skt. *vāhana*) built for her. Then there was the Reṭṭiyār from Taṇṭarāmpaṭṭu. He would take his bath every morning, then come to the temple and pray, then go home to eat. At the time he owned ten acres of land. He prayed to the goddess, saying: 'I have land, but no cattle (to plough the fields).' The goddess told him in a dream: 'Take some sesame seeds and place them in a corner.' He did so. Then the Ammaṉ called her armies of demons (*pūtam*), they took the seeds and sowed them in the field. Then the rains came and the sesame plants grew without weeds in them. The Reṭṭiyār harvested them and he gave the goddess

one part of the income and he took two parts. From his income he took a part and with it, he built the *kōpuram*.'[1]

Still, a few other people contributed to the construction of this temple. Their statues are on the pillars inside the temple and they or their descendants still take an active part in the goddess' festival, each one being in charge of a day of the festival and bearing the expense of that day. According to the informants, the temple was built during the time of the Nawabs (early 18th century). It is now in a pitiable condition, but the community has no money to undertake the necessary repairs.

a. Location

A look at the Census lists suggests that the majority of Aṅkāḷamman temples are concentrated in the northern part of Tamilnadu. The temples seem to follow a semicircle in a southern direction along the Eastern and Western Ghats. There are relatively fewer temples along the sea shore and in the fertile plains than there are in the higher, hilly regions. It is interesting that the goddess, in her wanderings, also follows a southern route (from Kāñcīpuram to Malaiyanūr). Were the goddess associated with one or two castes only, it would be relatively easy to trace her spread through the caste's migration pattern; to try to do this for eight or more different castes is a horrendous, if not impossible task. Since Aṅkāḷamman is also well represented in Andhra Pradesh, the possibility that she originated there cannot be ruled out; however, until more is known about Aṅkāḷamman in Andhra Pradesh (and so far I would maintain she has little in common with her namesake in Tamilnadu), nothing definitive can be said about this point.[2] What can, with reasonable certainty, be established is that the centre of the Aṅkāḷamman cult in Tamilnadu was and still is Mēl Malaiyanūr. In all northern districts (that is, excepting Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli) almost every *pūcāri* I spoke to, knew about the temple in Mēl Malaiyanūr and the majority of them considered it to be the most important Aṅkāḷamman temple. In the Madurai district, Periyakulam Aṅkāḷamman temple claims to be an 'offspring' of the Malaiyanūr temple and the Kampam *pūcāri* maintained

[1] *kōpuram* is properly a gate tower, however, the term is often used to mean the tower over the sanctum, which may be meant here.

[2] For one possible historical evidence regarding this question see below under 'Mutaliyār'.

that the goddess had been brought from the north. In Maturai town and south of it, the *pūcāri* did not know about the Malaiyanūr temple.

In the town or village, the location of the Aṅkāḷamman temple varies. Generally, in smaller and larger towns the temple(s) may be centrally located (Tri., Kovai, Tiruva., Mdr.), whereas in the villages the temple usually has its place at the outskirts, preferably close to the cremation ground or an uncultivated plot of land. Sometimes the temple will be close to or in the street in which the community associated with it lives (Valpt., Valpettai). There may be two Aṅkāḷamman temples close to each other in the same village; for example in Nāṭṭukkalpāḷaiyam, where one branch of the Ceṭṭiyār family, after a dispute with the others, decided to build its own temple; or in Vālājāpeṭṭai, where the old temple is marked by a *bilva* tree, and the new temple contains a termite hill. According to one informant (Kovai), Aṅkāḷamman temples should be facing north, however, this is not always the case, many face east.

b. Age

It must be said at the outset, that dating the temples was not my main interest, nor am I qualified to do so. However, a few words about the temples' ages may be in place. According to the Census, some of the temples are as old as 500 or even 1000 years (Accir.). There are obvious problems involved in dating a temple, the foremost of them being the lack of stone inscriptions or written records of the temples' history. Further, unlike the big Śiva temples which could count on large donations from kings and chieftains, the Amman temples had to depend on private persons' generosity to a large degree; in other words, the goddess may have to live in a shrine for a long time before the community can afford to build her a temple. Even then, the temple will more likely be of a very simple structure, without much ornamentation. Old temples, not considered worthy of preservation, are often torn down and new ones erected in their place. Another possibility of dating a temple would be by dating the statue (*mūrtti*) in the sanctum, but here we encounter a different sort of problem: in the dim light of the oillamp, features (which are often unrecognizable because of a layer of hardened oil and various clothes and ornaments) are difficult to distinguish. The *pūcāri* will give an approximate age of the temple, often

counted by the generations who have done service in the temple. Sometimes, however, the founders of the temple may have moved away from the village a long time ago and left the temple in charge of another caste. Here are a few examples which illustrate these points: Kallūr: the present *pūcāri* is a Kōmatti Cettiyār. The temple was built during his forefathers' time (Cōḷa period), but the sanctum had apparently been built by Cempaṭavar. These fishermen, unable to make a living in this area, had all left the village and given charge of the temple to the Cettiyār. Kīḻākkulam: the *pūcāri* is a Piḷḷaimār, the temple is 'in the hands of' the Tēvar community. The temple had been constructed by Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār who left the village about 400 years ago. Orraikkālmaṇṭapam: According to the Census, the temple is 300 years old. According to informants, Kavuntar families had the temple constructed 150 years ago. In any event, the temple did not exist any longer in 1981. It had been torn down and a new one was under construction. Citamparam: A new temple is being built for Aṅkāḷamman on the site where the old temple used to stand. The *pūcāri* related that the old temple had been 700 years old and that it had been constructed at a time previous to the famous Naṭarāja temple.

For some temples precise dates were known: Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Parvatarājakulavīti): The Aṅkāḷamman statue was installed in 1900; 14 years later, in 1914, the temple was built. In 1845 the Cempaṭavar of Vāḷacapāṭ began to build their own Aṅkāḷamman temple with a handful of earth from the termite hill of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr. In 1981 the big festival during Māci *civaṉrāttiri* was celebrated for the 121st time (i.e., the celebration was left out only 15 times since the beginning of the cult in this town). Two of the temples I visited have stone inscriptions (Irāyapuram in Madras and Mēl Malaiyaṉūr), however the inscriptions do not contain dates of the foundation of the temples.[1] According to the Census of India,[2] the temple of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr belongs to the Cēra period 'as evidenced by the stone inscriptions on it.' I do not know what is meant here by 'Chera period' and on which inscriptions this dating is based. The inscriptions which I was shown (on one of the sanctum walls) cannot be

[1] For Irāyapuram see below 'Ācāri'.

[2] Census of India, 1961, vol. IX, Part XI-D ii. Trichi and South Arcot.

earlier than the 18th century.[1] (The sanctum looked like it had been assembled from older and newer building blocks). If the 'Chera period' refers to the reign of Ravivarman Kulaśekhara, it will be after 1312, when that king invaded the Pāndya country and marched as far north as Kāñcīpuram.[2] No other Cēra kings are known, to my knowledge, to have ruled in that area. That the worship of Aṅkāḷammaṉ in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr may indeed go back as far as the 14th century is quite possible, even probable, and the oldest Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples or shrines may have been built some 6-700 years ago.[3] It would not be unreasonable to assume that Aṅkāḷammaṉ's cult spread during the Vijayanagar and Nāyak rules, which fostered the spread and popularity of local religious practices and encouraged their syncretism; (animal sacrifices were part of the *mahānavamī* festival of Vijayanagar, hookswinging and walking over hot coals during village *jātras* are reported from that time).[4]

c. Structure

Most of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples[5] are simple buildings, square one-room structures, without surrounding walls (Skt. *prākāra*) or *kōpuram*. Often the building, because of its size, can only contain the sanctum. If the temple has *parivāra* (attendant) deities, these are housed in separate, small shrines on the left and right sides of the front of the main building, or they are given a space in the entrance *maṇṭapam*. Bigger temples sometimes have a temple tower (*vimāṉam*, Skt. *vimāna*), sculpted and painted according to the favored Tamil rainbow palette, or simply white-washed and topped with the *kalacam* (3, 5 etc. pots). Architectural details follow the Dṛavidian style: *kūḍu*-shapes and *kīrtimukha*. Facing the sanctum is the bull or the lion and the *pali pīṭam*. Often we see a statue of the goddess over the entrance to the sanctum or over the entrance gate. The lion (her vehicle) or the bull, sit on the roof corners.

[1] This was the conclusion of Dr. V. Venugopal, Madurai Kamaraj University and Dr. Candramurti, Registering Officer, Mahal, Maturai.

[2] Sastri, Nilakanta (1976), p. 231.

[3] Burton Stein (1973) shows that Devī-shrines became prominent in the 13th century. The following footnote in Sastri, K. (1974), p. 220 could mean that the Aṅkāḷammaṉ cult in Andhra goes (at least) back to the 12th century: 'In the Aṅkālamma temple at Kārempūdi (Guntūr district) is an inscription of A.D. 1164, which refers to that village goddess, as Vindhyavāsinī'.

[4] Sastri, Nilakanta (1963), p. 131.

[5] I am using the word 'temple' in the sense of a site inhabited by a deity, the way *kōvil* is also used by informants.

Large temples will have a temple tree (in Cūḷai it is the *vaṉṉi* tree - *prosopis spicigera* -; under it the original statue of Aṅkāḷammaṉ had been discovered), a well, maybe a termite hill and serpent stones (*nākakkal*) and shrines dedicated to Murukaṉ, the nine planets (*navakkirakam*, Skt. *navagraha*), Bhairava, Pēcci, Maturai Vīraṉ etc. (Mdr.Iraya., Mdr.Culai, Venk.). Not all temples have a permanent flagstaff (see Ch. III, D.1). The temple in Civarakkōṭṭai and one Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple in Maturai (opposite of Mīṉākṣī College) are without a proper *mūlavar* statue,[1] simple shrines or platforms represent the deities; in the latter temple, the shrine for Aṅkāḷammaṉ contains a *tiricūlam*, whereas the shrines of the *parivāra* deities are empty.

2. Iconography (the goddess and her attendants).

Before we go on to describe the goddess, a word should be said about her 'purity'. In 1950 'The Madras Animals and Birds Sacrifices Prohibition Act'[2] was passed, which prohibits the sacrifice of animals and birds in or in the precincts of Hindu temples in the State of Madras.[3] It is a well known fact that a great many deities used to be propitiated with animal sacrifices, and nobody would deny that this still happens today. The law, however, has caused changes, so that if we refer today to a deity as *acutta* (impure, non-vegetarian) it simply means that non-vegetarian food is part of the offering made to the deity - it does not necessarily imply that animals are sacrificed in the temple, for the animals may be sacrificed outside of or at a distance from the temple, in accordance with the law. Many Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples, in keeping with the above law, have altogether stopped any non-vegetarian offerings, be it in the temple or outside of it (for instance during rituals which take place some distance away from the temple).[4] The majority of Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples will tolerate non-vegetarian offerings by devotees to at least one of the *parivāra* deities which have separate shrines and/or during the ritual outside of the temple. About 98 % of the *pūcāri* said that the Aṅkāḷammaṉ of their temple is a *cutta* (pure) goddess. This should be the consequence of the above law, considering that a) previous to the above law animals did get sacrificed to Aṅkāḷammaṉ and b) some of the rituals for Aṅkāḷammaṉ (in particular the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and *piḷḷaippāvu*), as they are performed today, are still strongly reminiscent of the deity's original, non-vegetar-

[1] i.e., the permanently fixed statue in the sanctum.

[2] Madras Act No. XXXII of 1950. *Civil Court Manual, Madras Acts*, 7th ed., (4 vols), vol. I, published by the Madras Law Journal Office, Madras, 1966, p. 250.

[3] A notice to this effect can be seen in the temple of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr.

[4] The Coimbatore (Kōvai) temple is a case in point.

ian nature. In order to avoid the conflict between a *cutta* Aṅkāḷammaṉ in the sanctum and an *acutta* Aṅkāḷammaṉ during the ritual outside the temple (especially where the ritual is said to represent the destruction of Vallāḷakantaṉ and his wife), one of two solutions were adopted: 1) during the ritual animal sacrifices were replaced by vegetable ones or 2) Aṅkāḷammaṉ's ritual role was handed over to one of the *acutta* goddesses, namely Pēcci, then said to be an *avatāram* of Aṅkāḷammaṉ. Pēcci is therefore (in the Coimbatore, Trichi and Tanjavur districts) the most important 'sub-deity' in Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples. A further goddess which plays a significant part in the Aṅkāḷammaṉ cult in the Coimbatore and partly in the Salem districts, is Macāṉiyammaṉ. A particular ritual performed during the annual festival involves, in many cases, the creation of a bigger-than-life-size figure in the cremation ground, sculpted out of clay and the ashes of a recently burnt body. The name of this figure varies from temple to temple (e.g., Macāṉakaṟuppaṉ, Vīrabhadra, Kāttēri, Vallāḷarājaṉ's wife). In some places however, the figure is identified with Aṅkāḷammaṉ; sometimes it is said to be her *avatāram* Pēcci or even (to complicate matters) an *avatāram* of Pēcci called Macāṉiyammaṉ or Macāṉiyāttā (mother of the cremation ground).[1] In some places in the Coimbatore district this figure has become permanent,[2] i.e., the figure is not destroyed and re-created each year, but is at one point fashioned out of cement to make it last. This permanent figure is then called Macāṉiyammaṉ/āttā and is a deity in her own right. She will have her own temple, a special *pūcāri* assigned to her, with the result that in a few places she will hardly be connected with Aṅkāḷammaṉ anymore (see below and 'festival').

a. Aṅkāḷammaṉ

a.1. Her name.

What does the name Aṅkāḷammaṉ mean? We know that Māriyammaṉ can be be derived from Tamil *māri* ('small-pox', 'death', 'rain') or Iruḷāyi from Tamil *iruḷ* ('darkness'); what is the etymology of Aṅkāḷammaṉ? I put this question to the informants and here are the answers I received. At least six informants related the following story:[3]

[1] from Skt. *śmaśāna*, Tamil *mayāṉam* - 'cremation ground'.

[2] The only permanent *mayāṉa*-figures outside of the Coimbatore district I came across were in Irācipuram (Salem district) where the figure is in the temple and in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr where it is not inside the temple but within its precinct.

[3] (Anai., Iraci., Per., Amur.,Venk., Pol.)

'Īśvarī and Śiva were walking across the big lake near Tāyanūr (or Malaiyanūr). There was a deep spot and Śiva, who preceded the goddess called out a warning: '*aṅkē āḻam* ('it is deep there'), and that is how the goddess got her name.[1]

An interesting etymology comes from Malaiyanūr (inf. 2):

'When the Amman had destroyed Vallāḻakantan she was so angry that Krsna, afraid, had made a pit for her and covered it with a rock (myth 3). Amman asked: 'What will people call me?' Krsna answered: 'Since you came here with such a great rage (*aṅkāram* - 'pride, haughtiness', coll.: 'rage'), people will call you Aṅkāḷi.'[2]

Other informants derived the name from Tamil *aṅkam* (Skt. *aṅga*) - 'body':

'When Īśvarī was sent to destroy Vallāḷarājan in order to prevent Śiva's birth, Śiva said to Īśvarī that she would not be able to kill the king, since he was so powerful and she should not have given her promise (to the gods) to do it. Īśvarī replied that with Śiva's blessings she would be able to perform this task. Śiva agreed to help her, but said she would have to change her form. Īśvarī had been born in six places (i.e., she had six forms), therefore, Śiva took all the six forms, joined them and hit them with a club. From these six forms or bodies (*aṅkam*) came Aṅkāḷamman. (Mutta.)

Another informant suggested Aṅkāḷa Paramēcuvari means *aṅkattai āḷum* Paramēcuvari, 'Paramēcuvari who rules the body'. But according to the *śāstras*, he added, Aṅkāḷamman means *am Kāḷi* (Tamil *am* - 'beautiful'), beautiful Kāḷi.[3] Tamil scholars' opinions were divided between the latter derivation (*am Kāḷi*)[4] and a derivation from *kaṅkāḷam* ('skeleton').

Many informants connected her name to her *akōra rūpam*, her terrifying form, without furnishing an etymology: Aṅkāḷamman received her name when she trampled the skull of Brahmā under her foot in the cremation ground (Mal. (1), Tinti.), or when the Amman as a Rākṣasī fought the Rākṣasas (Mad.Gu.), or when the goddess took the form of Bhadrakāḷī

[1] ḻ and ḷ are two different phonemes in the Tamil language, but in colloquial Tamil ḻ is frequently pronounced ḷ.

[2] Coll. for *akaṅkāram*. Cf. Oppert (1893), p. 485 who equates Aṅkāḷamman with Aṅgāramma and derives the name from Skt. *aṅgāra* ('charcoal').

[3] (Tri-P.). This etymology was also advanced by Vidvān M. Mācilāmaṇi (Mdr.Cinta), a man learned in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit.

[4] in agreement with the Tamil Lexicon.

(Pattirakāḷi) in order to destroy the sacrifice (*yākam*, Skt. *yāga*) of Dakṣa (Takkaṉ). (Mdr.Cinta (2)).

Aṅkāḷammaṉ's 'full' name is Aṅkāḷa Īcuvari (or Īsvari) or Aṅkāḷa Paramēcuvari (or Paramēsvari) and informants usually called her either of these. They never used the name 'Aṅkammā' for the goddess, but some did say that girls named after the goddess will be called 'Aṅkammā'. Instead of using her full name, informants simply called the goddess 'Ammaṉ' or 'Īcuvari'. 'Aṅkāḷi' seems to occur frequently in verses of praise, but rarely in conversations. Another name of the goddess is Pūṅkāvaṉam ('flowergarden', pleasure grove'). One of the Cempaṭavar *pūcāri* of the Malaiyaṉūr temple is called Pūṅkāvaṉam (inf. (1)). His mother had made a vow to the effect that, should the goddess bless her with a child, she would name it Pūṅkāvaṉam.

a.2. Her iconography.

There are no distinctive features in the *mūrtti* of Aṅkāḷammaṉ which single her out from other goddesses, nor do the iconographic representations of the various *mūrtti* of Aṅkāḷammaṉ correspond. As a very general rule, we can describe her as follows:

She has four arms which hold, in the upper left hand the trident, in the lower left the *kapālam*, in the upper right the *uṭukkai* (*ḍamaru*), the middle, tapered part of which is encircled by a snake, and in the lower right a sword or knife (*vāḷ, katti*). The position of the trident and the drum may be reversed (i.e., trident in upper right and *uṭukkai* in upper left), possibly signifying the goddess' *cutta* aspect. In the Citamparam Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple the main *mūrtti* is *cutta* and has the latter iconography, while in a separate shrine the goddess is *acutta* and represented according to the former iconography. A further frequent variant is the replacement of the trident with the sling (*pācam*, Skt. *pāśa*) in the upper left. Sometimes the trident is found in place of the sword. The lower left hand will always carry the cup or skull (*kapālam*). The place of the sword is usually in the lower right hand.

The *mūlava mūrtti* (in the sanctum sanctorum) is in a sitting pose, the left leg folded up on the seat, the right leg pointing downwards. Under her right foot is often one head, said to be Brahmā's head, or

three heads.[1] The head is most likely in imitation of Mahisa's head, found on representations of Durgā. The *uṟcava mūrtti* (*utsava mūrti*), the idol carried around in processions, is in a standing pose.

On her head, the goddess wears a conical shaped crown, often framed by a halo of flames. Sometimes, instead of the crown, strands of matted hair (*caṭai*) will rise up like flames or the *caṭai* will flow out under her crown. Rarely, a cobra will spread its hood over her head. The two fangs (*ciṅkappal* 'lion's tooth') suggest an originally theriomorphic form of the goddess.

Aṅkāḷammaṉ shares this iconography with many other goddesses. Oppert[2] describes Ellammā as wearing a 'crown with serpents lying over it...', as having four hands which hold, respectively, a drum round which a serpent is entwined (upper right), a trident (lower right), a noose (upper left) 'and in her bent left hand the skull of the torn-off head of Brahman.' Posters of Māriyammaṉ show her in the same sitting pose as Aṅkāḷammaṉ, with her right foot resting on three heads. The inconsistencies in the representations of Aṅkāḷammaṉ point to a relatively late development of her iconography. Her image incorporates features of various, mostly śaivite, deities. The *uṭukkai*, an attribute of Śiva, is well known from the 10/11th cent. Cōḷa bronzes of Śivanaṭarājā. The *kapālam* is pictured in the hands of Cāmuṇḍā/Kālī in stone sculptures as early as the 8th century.[3] The *pācam* is of course originally an attribute of Yama and the sword is also said to be the weapon of the goddess worshipped by the Eyiṉar.[4] With the sword the goddess (Mahiṣāsuramardinī) cut off the buffalo demon's head.[5] The same instrument was used by the warriors to sever their heads as an offering to the goddess.[6] In the cult of Aṅkāḷammaṉ the sword can also represent Śiva.[7] Representations of Bhairavī on the pillars of the outer *mantapam* of the Ekāmrēśvara temple in Kāñcīpuram show her in a sitting

[1] The *mūlava mūrtti* of the Citamparam temple shows six heads under the goddess' foot, two sets of three, one below the other. The three heads were identified as the Trimūrti by the *pūcāri*.

[2] Oppert (1893), p. 468.

[3] For example the one in the Bhubanesvar Museum.

[4] Cilap. (1968), p. 316, canto XII, *muṉṟiṟciṟappu* 9:*varivaḷaikkai vāḷēnti*..

[5] *Devī-māhātmyam* Ch. 3, verse 42.

[6] Cf. Mahalingam (1967), p. 27 and Murty (1982), p. 213.

[7] see below, *'alaku niṟuttal'*.

pose, her right foot over a head, holding in her hands *tiricūlam*, *uṭukkai* (with the snake wrapped around it), *kapālam* and *pācam*, and on her head a crown surrounded by flames.[1] Bhairava, on a pillar of the same *maṇṭapam*, carries the same 'weapons'.

The weapons of Aṅkālammaṉ, the skull, the fangs and the flames issuing from her head, all stress her *akōra* nature and fit her into the category of Kālī-type deities. Aṅkālammaṉ's association with the cremation ground further points in that direction, however, we have to state right away, that informants rarely called her Kāli and that Kāli in Tamilnadu is a different goddess altogether with her own temples and special rituals.

Surprisingly, some *pūcāri* ignored Aṅkālammaṉ's iconography. When asked what the goddess carries in her hands, they first had to check. Here again we see that the devotee is not very much concerned with 'form'.

b. Pēcci, Pēycci (Pēcciyāyi)

Her name (from Tamil *pēy*) suggests that she is one of those feared, malevolent spirits which haunt lonely places and have their abodes on cross-roads and on certain trees. If Aṅkālammaṉ seems ferocious, Pēcci outdoes her. Most of the time Pēcci is shown in the act of ripping open a person's (identified with Vallālakantaṉ's wife) stomach. The intestines which hang from her mouth are witness to her extraordinary appetite. This picture of Pēcci is very much reminiscent of Narasiṃha. Like Aṅkālammaṉ, Pēcci often has four arms and sometimes one goddess cannot be distinguished from the other, for they may carry the same weapons and share other traits such as the *caṭai* hair, the fangs, etc. In one wall-painting (Iru.) Pēcci is drawn with eight arms, in the lowest on the right she holds the *kapālam* and in the left a child. Pēcci is in many temples the goddess who both harms and protects children. When she holds a child in her lap (Tri-P.) her protective aspect is emphasized. According to the Kōvai informant, Pēcci should be facing west and have her place in the outer *prākāra*.

[1] According to Brown (1971), p. 94, the date of the *maṇṭapam* is 1509. For the iconography of Bhairavī see Rao, Gopinatha (1971), p. 357; Pal (1978), p. 138, No. 78.
Cōḻa images of Durgā show her with the flame-like hair.

With very few exceptions, Pēcci is an *acutta* goddess. Many temples will have a special non-vegetarian *pūcai* for Pēcci after the celebration for Aṅkāḷamman has ended (goat and chicken curry, eggs, liquor and sometimes gañjā are offered to her, e.g., Nattuk.). In the Veṅkampūr temple Pēcci is a *cutta* goddess, and according to the *pūcāri*, she is the *kula teyvam* of the Aiyar. The *acutta* goddess in this temple is Iruḷāyi.

Pēcci, as an important sub-deity in Aṅkāḷamman temples, will be found in the Coimbatore, Trichi and Tanjavur districts. In these districts myth 3 is altered to the effect that Aṅkāḷamman changed into Pēcci in order to prevent Śiva's birth, thus giving Pēcci a significant role in the yearly rituals.

We encounter Pēcci also in the Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts, where, however, she is less prominent. Usually she has an equal status to the other *parivāra* deities which are frequently 21 in number.

c. Other deities in the Aṅkāḷamman temples

The most interesting of the *parivāra* deities is Pāvāṭairāyaṉ. 'Pāvāṭairāyaṉ' has been translated as 'one who wears the lower garment of a woman'[1], 'king of the long skirt'[2] (derived from *'pāvāṭai'* 'petticoat'). Another derivation is from an alternative meaning of 'pāvāṭai' 'an offering to the gods', said to be the offering placed before Aṅkāḷamman which she returns to the devotee in form of *piracātam* (*prasāda*) (Mdr.Cinta.(2)). Pāvāṭairāyaṉ is known to have offered himself to his mother, Aṅkāḷamman:

> 'Pāvāṭairāyaṉ who sits on Aṅkāḷammaṉ's lap, Murukaṉ, Vināyaka and Vīrabhadra (*Vīrapattiraṉ*) are the children of the goddess. One day, she wanted to test her four children, to see who loved her most. She called all four of them to tell them that she was hungry. (They did not take any notice of what she said), Vināyaka strolled around in the streets, Murukaṉ was carried away by beautiful Valli, Vīrabhadra was intoxicated with liquor and 'high' on gañjā, only Pāvāṭairāyaṉ came to his mother's side and asked her what she wanted. She said: 'I am hungry.' Thereupon Pāvāṭairāyaṉ opened his chest and said: 'You may eat all this,' and he pulled out his heart, his

[1] Oppert (1893), p. 485, where he is said to be the son of Māriyammaṉ.

[2] Shulman (1980), p. 299.

lungs, liver and intestines. Now the goddess knew that he was her best child and she placed him on her lap.' (Mdr.Culai).[1]

According to one informant, Pāvatairāyaṉ is mute:

'The story goes, that the goddess' child (Pāvatairāyaṉ) used to bestow boons on people quite freely. The goddess did not like this, because she granted boons only to those who had a great amount of faith (if a person's faith is strong, she will grant him a boon, regardless of whether he is a 'good' or a 'bad' person). To prevent the child from giving boons to anybody and everybody, the goddess took him onto her lap and made him mute.' (Mdr.Culai).

Pāvatairāyaṉ's devotion to his mother leads one scholar to call him 'the Princeling in petticoat, the typical Mother's child.'[2] Pāvatairāyaṉ, apart from being Aṅkālammaṉ's son, is also her guard (*kāval*). His effeminate, yet heroic nature is well expressed in a small stone statue standing in front of Aṅkālammaṉ's sanctum in Acciṟupākkam: he holds a sword in his right and a shield in his left hand, his hip is slightly bent, which, together with what look like breasts, give him a very feminine appearance. He does not wear a skirt though and neither does he wear one on a statue in the Irāyapuram temple. Pāvatairāyaṉ, like his brother Vīrabhadra, is fond of liquor (myth 9) and gañjā.[3] Devotees will offer goat meat, dried fish, eggs, cheroots (*curuttu*), liquor (toddy or arrack) and gañjā to him (Vilu.)

Pāvatairāyaṉ is less frequently found in the Coimbatore district, where he is replaced by Irulappaṉ or Irulappacāmi. Irulappaṉ is identified with the child (Śiva) which Aṅkālammaṉ or Pēcci removes from Niśāsiṉī's womb. The Ammaṉ then makes him her guard (e.g., Orrai.). Irulappaṉ may be given a place in Aṅkālammaṉ temples of other districts as well.

[1] Compare the following, in Richards, *Madras Distr. Gazetteers*, South Arcot, (1905-32): '(Pāvātairāyaṉ) was out hunting one day and accidentally shot an arrow into an ant-hill in which she (Aṅkāḷammaṉ) happened to be living. He took a pick-axe and began digging out the arrow, and in so doing he unwittingly wounded the goddess, of whose presence there he was unaware. Overcome with remorse, he asked what he could do to atone for his sin. The deity replied that he could get her some food, as she was hungry. Instantly he disembowelled himself with the pick-axe and offered her his vitals. Aṅkāḷammaṉ was so pleased with his devotion that she ordered him always to remain with her...' (p. 364).

[2] Bazou (1958), p. 384. He says that Aiyaṉār is in some places represented as Pavadai Rayan.

[3] Cf. Oppert (1893), p. 485.

The following are Aṅkāḷamman's sons and guards: Murukaṉ (or Subrahmaṇya, Cuppiramaṇiyaṉ) and Vināyaka (or Gaṇapati, Kaṇapati), placed on either side in front of the sanctum; Pāvaṭairāyaṉ, Vīrabhadra and Irulappaṉ who may have separate shrines or be present in form of a simple statue or a stone. Vīrabhadra and Akōra Vīrabhadra are also guardian deities (*kāval*). Other guardian deities are: Madurai (Maturai) Vīraṉ (popular in the Madurai, Trichi and Tanjavur districts), Karuppaṇacāmi or Malaiyāḷa Karuppaṇacāmi, also Macāṇa Karuppaṉ, Caṅkilikkaruppaṉ or some other Karuppaṉ, Muṉīcuvarar, Nākacarpam. The *kāval* gods are frequently *acutta*. Female *parivāra* deities are rarer: Rākkāyi, Iruḷāyi, the Kaṉṉimār occur. Like Pēcci, they are often meat-eaters.

In the Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts the *parivāra* deities will often number 21. This number is not exclusive to Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples, Aiyaṉār temples also usually house 21 gods. Only few *pūcāri* were able to name all the 21 gods; to be able to do so is to be admired, as the following story illustrates:

> 'Once, when I was on my way to Kuṟṟālam, a handful of men grabbed me. They asked: 'What kind of guy (*pillai* lit. 'child') are you?' I pulled up my dhoti (*vēsti*) to show them. Then they were about to beat me up and I cried out: 'Oh Aṅkāḷa Īcuvari, why do you want to test me?' So the men said: 'Aṅkāḷa Īcuvari? Can you tell us the names of the 21 gods?' Usually I don't remember them, but then I did and after I had told them the names and distributed *vipūti* (*vibhūti* - the holy ashes) to them, they gave me presents.'(Kamp.).

The lists of the 21 gods vary, they include the following female deities: Pēcci, Rākkāyi, the seven Kaṉṉimār, Bhadrakāḷī (Pattirakāḷi), Iruḷāyi, Pakavati and the following male deities: Vināyakar, Cuppiramaṇiyaṉ, Vīrapattiraṉ, Cōṉai, Cappāṇi, Karuppaṇacāmi, Bhairava (Vairavar), Caṅkili, Makāmuṉi, Lātacaṉṉāci and Kurunātacāmi. Which and how many of them are *cutta* or *acutta* varies from temple to temple. In the Madurai district, Gurunāthaswāmi (Kurunātacāmi) is sometimes considered to be Aṅkāḷammaṉ's consort (e.g., Pōtumpūr, where Aṅkāḷa Īcuvari and Kurunātacāmi are the central deities of the Aiyaṉār temple; and Vaṭivēlkarai, where they also sit side by side). It is rare, however, that Aṅkāḷammaṉ's consort (a form of Śiva) will be present in her sanctum or that Aṅkāḷammaṉ is in fact 'married' to one of the gods in her temple. Cūḷai, where her consort is Kāci Vicuvanātaṉ and Irāyapuram, where he is Māyāṇṭi, complete my list of examples.

d. Macāṉiyamman[1]

The forms and the spellings of her name vary: Mācāṇiyammaṉ (Anai.), Mayāṉa Makācakti (Kuppucci.), Mācāṉaruttiri (Culur), Mayāṉa Īcuvari (Iru.), Macāṉiyāttā (Pal.). Macāṉiyammaṉ is an imposing female, measuring 6 to 8 meters, stretched out on her back and looking skywards. Her huge protruding eyes, her tongue which sticks out and the fangs at the corners of her mouth give her a frightful appearance. Her matted hair hangs loose and over the crown of her head a cobra spreads its hood. Her four or eight arms, stretched or bent at the elbows, rest on the ground, or at times, two of her hands, which hold a knife and a trident, point upwards. Her 'weapons' usually include the knife or short sword, the *uṭukkai*, a snake and the *kapālam*. The clothes she wears are painted on, green and red sari folds (Culur) or in Irukūr she wears green pants and a red belt or loin cloth folded up between her legs, as if the lower part of her were male. Flower garlands are modelled from her neck to her waist and fresh flower garlands decorate her chest. At her feet there may be a small crouching figure, called Asura (*acuraṉ*) (e.g., Kuppucci.). She is surrounded by stones resembling *liṅgas*, numbering 108 and said to be her guards (*kāval*) or her children (*kuḻantai*). In Irukūr her temple resembles a huge cage, the four sides consisting of lattice work reaching up to the roof. Kuppucciputūr Mayāṉa Makācakti was lying in a temporary structure of palm-leaf thatch when we visited her. She had just recently been 'created', and a permanent temple will be built for her soon. In 1980, in Kuppucciputūr, during the *mayāṉakkoḻḻai*, a woman got possessed by the goddess and the goddess made known, through the woman, that she wished to remain in the cremation ground. That is why a permanent cement figure of the goddess had been made. Despite this permanent Mayāṉa Makācakti, the people of this village continue to perform the *mayāṉakkoḻḻai* with the usual temporary figure (Pēcci) made, in this case, with the earth of a termite hill (see below). Why is Macāṉiyammaṉ lying on the ground? 'Because if she were standing up, she would burn the whole universe with her eyes, she is so powerful!' (Iraci.).

Macāṉiyammaṉ temples, as her name suggests, are close to the cremation ground (Iru., Kuppucci.) or in an area some distance away from the village (Culur). In Pallaṭam the Macāṉiyāttā temple is close to the bus-stand in the outskirts of the town. The Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple will be

[1] On Masan (a malevolent spirit) in Northern India, cf. Crooke (1894), p. 84 and p. 161 ff.

located ten to twenty minutes walk away from the Macāṉiyamman temple. An exception is Āṉaimalai where Mācāṉiyamman has no connection to an Aṅkāḷamman temple.

For Āṉaimalai Mācāṉiyamman a Kurukkal is priest; in Kuppucciputūr the son of the Aṅkāḷamman *pūcāri* (a Tēvar) has the priestly function for Mayāṉa Makācakti; in Pallaṭam a Nāyakkar is *pūcāri* for Macāṉiyāttā, while a Pillai serves Aṅkāḷamman.

B. Castes

In the following the castes associated with Aṅkāḷamman will be discussed, i.e., those castes to which *pūcāri* (for Aṅkāḷamman) and the families or clans which claim Aṅkāḷamman as their *kula teyvam* belong.

Table I, which was compiled from the 1961 Census of India and supplemented by my own notes, is to provide a very general overall view of the castes to which *pūcāri* of Aṅkāḷamman temples belong. The numbers beside each district represents the number of temples. It should be noted, that the number of *pūcāri* per caste and district is incomplete: the Census compilation is in itself incomplete; for some districts (e.g., Salem) only a small percentage of the *pūcāri* are listed. It should also be kept in mind that Pillai, Kavuntar, Nāyakkar for instance, are also titles adopted by various castes (e.g. Veḷḷāḷar often use the title Pillai) and that an exact distribution of *pūcāri* with regard to these three castes especially, is problematic. Nāyuṭu is, according to Thurston, the Telugu equivalent of the Tamil Nāyakkar.

Table I.

District	Cempatavar	Ceṭṭiyār	Veḷḷālar	Mutaliyār	Nāyakkar	Nāyutu	Vaṉṉiyar Paṭaiyāṭci	Tēvar	Paṇṭāram	Pillai	Kurukkal	Mūppaṉār[1]	Ācāri	Kavuṇṭar
Madras (5)	1				1	1					2		1[2]	
Chingleput (6)	1						1		2		1			
South Arcot (22)	5				1	1	3							1
North Arcot (15)	4								2					
Salem (20)		1			1		2		1	1			1	
Coimbatore (37)		7	1	3				2	11[3]	4	1			1
Trichi (17)		2	1	1					6[3]	1				
Tanjavur (11)			1				1		1		1	1		
Madurai (14)		2	2		1	1		1	1	1			1	
Ramnad (6)		1	1					1		1			1	
Tirunel-veli (2)			1	1										

[1] (agriculturists).

[2] In the Mdr. Irāyapuram temple an Ācāri was *pūcāri* prior to the appointment of a Kurukkal. (See below).

[3] This number includes one Liṅgāyat.

With a few exceptions (especially in the Pantāram and Kurukkal castes) the *pūcāri* of a particular Aṅkālamman temple will be from a lineage that has, as its *kula teyvam*, Aṅkālamman. Aṅkālamman of a particular place can be the *kula teyvam* for lineages of different castes. To give a rough idea of the patterns which exist within the system of relations between lineages/caste and Aṅkālamman, we shall discuss some of the castes with reference to specific temples. (Only samples will be given, for a list of *pūcāri* of other Aṅkālamman temples, see appendix). It should be clear, that other lineages of these castes have other *kula teyvam* and that, for instance, a member of the Ācāri caste can also be *pūcāri* for other goddesses, such as Kāmāṭciyamman or Māriyamman (for details, see Census of India).

The administration of the temples is the responsibility of from one to five trustees, or a combination of trustee and executive officer; the trustees can be either appointed or hereditary, and the number of them required depends on the size and income of the temple. If the temple's income exceeds a certain amount, a board of trustees will be in charge of the temple's administration. The trustees, or one of them, will preferably be chosen from the lineage most closely associated with the temple (i.e., that constructed the temple or members of which act or acted as *pūcāri*). A small percentage of the temple income has to be paid to the HRCE (Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments) Board (up to 7 %).[1] Since 1950, a growing majority of temples have been brought under the control of the HRCE Board and there are only a few and mostly small temples left which are entirely in the hands of the *pūcāri* (and his lineage or family).

1. Pantāram (temple priests, makers of flower garlands, suppliers of flowers for worship).[2]

a. Kunnattūr (Coimbatore district)

The priest of this temple, a Pantāram, is also priest for the nearby Poṅkāliyamman temple. A court decisions in ca. 1940 had conceded the priestly rights over the Aṅkālamman temple to the present family of Pantāram. Who the *pūcāri* was prior to the court decision is not clear. Various castes had donated money for the construction of the temple, in particular Mutaliyār, Kavuntar and Nāyakkar. Kōmatti Cettiyār also worship

[1] Kīlapāvūr, for example, pays 6 paisa per 1 Rupee (i.e., 6 %). For details regarding the administration of temples see Mudaliar (1974), p. 224 ff. and 232-235.

[2] For detailed informations on the castes cf. Thurston (1909 C&T).

at this temple. The priest's *kula teyvam* is Aṅkāḷammaṉ, but not the one in Kuṉṉattūr, rather it is one which is located two miles away and was brought there from an altogether different village. The Aṅkāḷammaṉ priest's brother is the priest of the Māriyammaṉ temple of the village. Various administrative problems have plagued the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple, and repeatedly new trustees have been appointed. Presently there are three trustees.

b. Avaṉāci (Coimbatore district)

The old temple had belonged to Mutaliyār, but they have left the town. A new temple is under construction. Before the present Paṇṭāram became priest at this temple, a person from his father-in-law's side had been priest. The Paṇṭāram's office at the temple is not hereditary.

c. Kūttaippār (Trichi district)

The temple was built by 30 families of Kaḷḷar. The priest is a Liṅgāyat Paṇṭāram, and for at least three generations, the same family has held the priestly office. The priest's *kula teyvam* is Bhadrakālī (Pattirakāḷi). Disputes among the Kaḷḷar families are said to be the reason that the yearly festival in the month of Māci has not been performed for three years in a row.

d. Āmūr (Trichi district)

Aṅkāḷammaṉ is the Paṇṭāram priest's *kula teyvam*. Two brothers and one brother-in-law share the priestly duties. Aṅkāḷammaṉ is also the *kula teyvam* of ten families of Mūppaṉār and of some Aiyar families of the village. (In the Melaṭṭūr Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple - in the Tanjavur district - a Mūppaṉār is *pūcāri*, but Aṅkāḷammaṉ is not his *kula* deity.)

2. Mutaliyār (farmers, weavers).

a. Muciri (Trichi district)

The Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple belongs to the Mutaliyār community which is spread over 14 nearby villages. Mutaliyār are *pūcāri*. Mutaliyār are also trustees of the temple. The trustee-ship is hereditary from father to son. Aṅkāḷammaṉ is the Mutaliyār's *kula teyvam* (the deity, i.e., some consecrated earth, had been brought from Tāyaṉūr, 7 or 8 generations ago). For 10 to 15 years the Māci *civaṉrāttiri* festival has not been celebrated because of disputes among the families. This Aṅkāḷammaṉ is also the *kula teyvam* of

a Vellālar family from Dindigul (Tintukkal) and a Vellālar family from Karur.

b. Muttanampālaiyam (Coimbatore district)

The present *pūcāri* is a Mutaliyār; previous to him, an Utaiyār (potter, *kucavar*) held the office.

c. Kīlapāvūr (Tirunelveli district)

Priest of the Aṅkālamman temple is a Kurukkal. The temple was built by Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār. About 200 families of Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār are members of the temple, they raise the money for the yearly festival. The trustees of the temple are Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār as well (the government took charge in 1947) and the office is hereditary. Seven of the Mutaliyār families hold special, honoured positions during the festival. A Tēvar from a different village is honoured during one day of the festival, since four or five generations ago his family had donated money or done a great service to the temple. Aṅkālamman is the *kula teyvam* of the Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār. According to one informant of this caste, they were 'born' from Kāmākṣī's anklet, but Thurston[1] relates that the Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār are descended from the nine heroes born to nine women. The mothers of these heroes were the nine beads (from Pārvatī's anklet) which Śiva had changed into women.

In a manuscript (in the Mackenzie Collection) there is an account of the Mutaliyār Poligars known as Uyyālvārs who, during the reign of Rāyar Appāji, came from the North (Ayodhya) to Vīra-pura (Chengleput district?) and brought with them the images of their deities Angālammai and Oyyālammai.[2]

3. Nāyutu (cultivators).

a. Teli (South Arcot district)

The Aṅkālamman temple is, apart from a few small shrines, the only temple in this village. The *pūcāri* is a Nāyutu (he wears the sacred thread), a Tamil speaker, although his ancestors may have migrated from a Telugu speaking area (judging from the *pūcāri*'s name: Varatarājulu). The headman or president of the village is also a Nāyutu. Of the ca. 100 families in

[1] Thurston (1909 C&T), 'Kaikōlan'.
[2] Mahalingam (1972), p. 140, section 11.

the village, the majority are Nāyuṭu, the rest mostly Kavuṇṭar. A dispute among the Nāyuṭu had led to a splitting of their community into two factions, each of which had been joined by a faction of Kavuṇṭar. The dispute had arisen over certain privileges which the Kavuṇṭar had in the participation in the deity's festival. Now both a Kavuṇṭar and a Nāyuṭu are two of the three trustees.[1] People of five other villages participate in the yearly ten-day festival for Aṅkāḷamman, they are Nāyuṭu from three of the villages (not related to the Teḷi Nāyuṭu) and Uṭaiyār Piḷḷai from the other two villages. Each village is assigned a particular day; - e.g., on the seventh day the Uṭaiyār Piḷḷai from Pūṭūr come to Teḷi. A woman of their community gets possessed by the goddess inside the sanctum and the Teḷi *pūcāri* questions the goddess, through the woman, about the festival (i.e., whether or not it has been celebrated satisfactorily so far).[2] Of the remaining five days, four are 'common' days and one day is set aside for the *pūcāri*'s family. One such common day is the *tēr* day, when the big chariot winds its way around the narrow streets. On this day many families will come for the head-shaving ceremony and devotees will fulfil their vows (e.g., by rolling once or a few times around the temple).

4. Vaṉṉiyar or Pataiyāṭci (cultivators).

a. Acciṟupākkam (Chengleput district)

The *pūcāri* is a Vaṉṉiyar, he is the fourth generation of *pūcāri* in his family. Aṅkāḷamman is his *kula teyvam*. The temple had been built by some pepper or anise merchants (see below). The ten-day yearly festival is divided among the following castes (it usually means, that the respective lineage pays the festival expense for that day):

1. day: *kirāma kaṇakkappiḷḷai* - village accountant
2. day: Ceṭṭiyār of a different village
3. day: Vaṉṉiyar[3]

[1] The Kavuṇṭar, e.g., hoist the flag. One Kavuṇṭar has made a life-long vow to dress as Kāṭṭēri (see below, ch. III.A.3.2). A Ceṭṭiyār goes in procession with the goddess on the *tēr*. The *pūcāri* carries the fire pot and the *kapparai*; his brother dresses as Aṅkāḷamman.

[2] See below, Ch. III.C.2.

[3] Day 2 and 3 used to be reserved for the Kōmaṭṭi Ceṭṭiyār, they have, however, left the village.

4. day: Vanniyar
5. day: Mutaliyār
6. day: Ācāri (Vicuvakarumā)
7. day: Yātavar
8. day: Rettiyār of a different village
9. day: Rettiyār of Accirupākkam
10. day: the temple (*devasthāna*) collects the money from the whole town.

b. Tañcāvūr

Pūcāri is a Vanniyar, eighth generation. Aṅkālamman is his *kula teyvam*. His ancestors had originally come from South Arcot. The temple had been built by Cettiyār. The Vanniyar's *kula teyvam* is transmitted through the male line, from father to son and a woman will adopt her husband's lineage deity. Other families who have this Aṅkālamman as their lineage goddess are from the following castes: Nāyutu, Ācāri, Cettiyār, Pantāram. The temple has very little income.

5. Cettiyār (traders, merchants).

'When the Amman had come to Malaiyanūr and settled here as a *kannippurru* (maiden termite hill), it happened that one day a pepper merchant came along with his cart (*vanti*) full of pepper. The three brothers (see myth 10) turned to him and said: 'We are going to do an *apiṣēkam* (*abhiṣeka* - 'bathing, anointing') of the Amman. Give us some pepper (*milaku*) and turmeric (*mañcal*) powder.' The pepper merchant replied: 'I don't have pepper, nor do I have turmeric, in my cart there is only clay (*kaliman*),' and left. He arrived at the market place (*manti*) and when he looked into the cart, instead of pepper, it contained clay. Then the merchant pleaded: 'Oh mother (goddess), unknowingly I committed this sin, I am sorry, if you turn this clay back into pepper, I will sell it and with the money from it, I shall build you a four-pillared *mantapam*.' So it happened and he built a four-pillared *mantapam* around the termite hill. This building was the first to be constructed around the termite hill. This pepper merchant was a Cetti.'(Mal. (1)).

For similar reasons the temple at Acciṟupākkam had been built by Cettiyār:

> 'Some pepper or anise (*cīrakam*) merchants on their way to Madras used to stop in Acciṟupākkam. They neglected to praise the goddess and therefore the Amman changed their merchandise into stones and dirt. When they prayed to the goddess and promised to build her a temple, she restored their goods.' (Accir.).

A family of Teluṅkucetti (who had come from a nearby village to Erumaivettippālaiyam to offer *poṅkal* to Aṅkāḷamman in order to assure a good pregnancy for their daughter) explained that Aṅkāḷamman became their *kula teyvam* as follows: One of their forefathers used to sell pepper. The British had at that time set up check posts and confiscated the pepper. The merchant prayed to Aṅkāḷamman and she converted the pepper into lentils,[1] and thus the pepper did not get confiscated.

a. Nāttukkalpāḷaiyam (Coimbatore district)

There are three lineages (*vakai*) of Teluṅkucettiyār in the village. Only one of the lineages (Kantikurukkaiyār) has Aṅkāḷamman as *kula teyvam*. This lineage 'owns' the temple, they conduct the festival, however, they do not perform the *pūcai*. The *pūcāri* are from another lineage, called Paruttiyūr. The third lineage is Vēṭacantūr and has no connection to the temple. 30 to 40 years ago, a dispute between two brothers resulted in the construction of a second temple to Aṅkāḷamman. For the annual festival sacred water (*tīrttam*, Skt. *tīrtha*) is brought to the temple from Malaiyanūr and other temples such as the Māriyamman temple of Camayapuram or the Śiva temple of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.

b. Tiruccirāppalli - Uṟaiyūr

The *pūcāri* belongs to the *Irupattunāṅku maṉai* Teluṅkucettiyār. Three families shared the priestly duties, however, one family has left the town. The three trustees of the temple are from the same caste. The present *pūcāri* is the fourth generation of *pūcāri* at the temple. The temple was built by Teluṅkucettiyār. Aṅkāḷamman is their *kula teyvam*. Other castes who worship at the temple are: Vellāḷar, Ampalakārar, Kōmatti Cettiyār, Maṟavar; barbers (Ampattar) also have this Aṅkāḷamman as their *kula teyvam*.

[1] *tuvaramparuppu* - a species of grain or lentils, *cytisus cajan*.

In the Kallur Aṅkālamman temple, the *pūcāri* is of the Komatti Cettiyār (bangle-sellers) caste. Aṅkālamman is his lineage deity. The temple had originally been established by Cempatavar. In the Kampam temple a Nāyutu is *pūcāri*, but Aṅkālamman and Macānan had been brought from the North by bangle-seller Komatti Cettiyār. In the Nattam temple the *pūcāri* belongs to the Coliyār Cettiyār group. His forefathers had carried with them the gods when they migrated from the Vaikai dam area. We have already seen how the Cettiyār established Aṅkālamman in Venkampur.

6. Ācāri (carpenters, smiths, stone-masons).

a. Irāyapuram (Madras city)

The priestly office is held by a Kurukkal. The temple was built about 300 years ago by *Ūrrukkātu Kuttiyāccāri* (Kuttiyāccāri from Ūrrukkātu, a village near Vālācapāt) and his family. A stone inscription above the temple entrance attests to this. The inscription says that the above person had come to Irāyapuram and established the goddess Aṅkālammai, an incarnation (*avatāram*) of Paramēsvari who is the left part of Śiva; that he had built the temple and that temple services and festivals should in the future be conducted by members of the same lineage; that the land belonging to the temple should not be sold; that the temple and its land should be inherited by members of the same lineage. Until 1947 the temple was administered by the founder's descendants. The present descendant of this lineage has filed a case in court, trying to claim back his rights over the temple. A board of trustees is now in charge of the temple. Other deities in the temple include Viśvanātha and his consort Visālaksī. Persons from castes such as Ācāri, Cettiyār, Nātār and Mutaliyār help finance the yearly festival in Māci.

b. Periyakulam, Vatakkarai (Madurai district)

The *pūcāri* (Ācāri) of the temple is a woman. Before her, her father had been *pūcāri*, and he had appointed as his successor his brother's son. Since the successor did not perform his duties properly, the present *pūcāri* took charge of the temple. She thought that many people objected to her being *pūcāri* because they believe a woman should not conduct religious ceremonies. The temple is small and has very little income. One wealthy Pillai family from a different village has this Aṅkālamman as *kula teyvam*. Other castes that worship here are Nāyutu and Konār.

7. Tēvar[1] (farmers, field-labourers, watchmen)

a. Maturai (near the Railway Station)

The temple was established by the present *pūcāri*'s forefathers about six to seven generations ago. They are Maṟavar and Aṅkāḷamman is their *kula teyvam*. Only unmarried males from the same lineage can be *pūcāri*, usually the office is handed down to the eldest son. Married men are not allowed to enter the sanctum.

b. Vāḷāntūr (Madurai district)

The *pūcāri* of this temple are Nāyakkar, but the Tevar (Kaḷḷar) community decides on matters such as when festivals are to be celebrated. In 1982 the big festival was celebrated for the first time again after a lapse of 20 years. Disagreement within the community was the explanation for this lapse. L. Dumont[2] recorded how Aṅkāḷamman was brought first by a Nāyakkar from Kerala, taken back and again brought to Vāḷāntūr by Tevar.

c. Civarakkōṭṭai (Madurai district)

The Aṅkāḷamman temple of this village is in the care of about 50 families of Akampaṭiyar. This lineage is said to have sprung from the union of a Piḷḷaimār woman and an Akampaṭiyar. The children of this woman intermarried with Akampaṭiyar. The original lineage temple is in a village called Nallaturaiviraṭṭukkuḷam in the Ramnad district and earth from that temple was used four generations ago to establish the temple in Civarakkōṭṭai. Previous to this, the families went to the *kula* temple in Ramnad district to celebrate the Aṅkāḷamman festival.

d. Urappuḷi (Ramnad district)

The *pūcāri* is a Piḷḷaimār[3] and Aṅkāḷamman is his *kula teyvam*. The trustee is a Tēvar whose lineage goddess is Aracamāriyamman of a different

[1] Tēvar is a title of Kaḷḷar, Maṟavar and Akampaṭiyar. On the Kaḷḷar see Dumont (1957). Maṟavar were inhabitants of the *pālai*, hunters (TL).

[2] Dumont (1957), p. 391.

[3] Piḷḷaimār are usually Veḷḷāḷar.

village. Communities that worship at this temple are mostly: Tēvar, Cērvai, Pillaimār and Kōnār. The story about this Aṅkālamman is as follows:

'She was the child of hunters. When they went hunting, they used to make her sit on a tree. The child, however, did not like that the hunters ate meat, she was a vegetarian. Once she called a passerby who took her down from the tree and left her at the river in a basket. People from Urappuli found the child. The girl stated her wish: 'Let me be here in this village.' With the permission of Aiyanār she stayed in this village and she now protects our village together with the other gods (Aiyanār, Vināyaka and Māriyamman.'[1]

e. Kīlākkulam

The *pūcāri* belongs to the Pillaimār caste. About 400 years ago, the temple was taken over by the Tēvar from the Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār (the originators of the temple), when the latter left the village. The Tēvar community (about 200 members) raises the funds for the festival. The festival is supervised by an Ācāri from a different village, who also has the important role of carrying the picture of Vīrabhadra during the festival.

In the Kuppucciputūr and Irukūr (Coimbatore district) Aṅkālamman temples Tēvar are *pūcāri* and have the goddess as their *kula teyvam*. The temple in Irukūr was established with some earth from another Aṅkālamman temple near Cūlur.

8. Kavuntar (farmers)

Kavuntar are rarely *pūcāri* of Aṅkālamman temples. In the Īrōṭu (Coimbatore district) Aṅkālamman temple a Kavuntar is the third generation of *pūcāri*. He receives a weekly salary. The temple belongs to 200 families of Cettiyār and Mutaliyār. A Kavuntar is *pūcāri* of the Aṅkālamman temple in Perumpākkam (South Arcot district), an Utaiyār is trustee. The temple in Orraikkālmaṇṭapam was built by Kavuntar, the

[1] As expected, Aṅkālamman is a *cutta* goddess in this temple. Hunters (Vēṭar) often play the *pampai* drum for Aṅkālamman (see above).

pūcāri is a Cettiyār. Kavuntar are trustees of various Aṅkāḷamman temples, they also participate in and give donations for the Aṅkāḷamman festivals. (Orrai., Kuppucci., Virap., Iraci.)

Basically, a clan or family from any caste can adopt Aṅkāḷamman as a *kula* deity (recently a family of Harijans set up a statue of Aṅkāḷamman at Madras Mint and started to worship her. A shrine has been built and the goddess already draws large crowds for the festival. One Aiyar family near Melattūr (Tanjavur district) said that Aṅkāḷamman is their *kula teyvam*; a Nāṭār Kavuntar family (formerly toddy tappers, now agriculturists) of Manattattai (Trichi district) has Aṅkāḷamman as *kula teyvam*).[1] One cannot say that Aṅkāḷamman is exclusively a *kula* goddess; she is sometimes the goddess of only one family and is sometimes treated like a 'village' goddess, the latter, for instance, if the caste in charge of the temple belongs to the majority group of the village and no other big or important temple exists in the village (Teḷi, Malaiyanūr, or Kīḻakkulam where the temple is simply called *māṭā kōvil* - mother goddess temple). A community will take over an Aṅkāḷamman temple because the people who built the temple or established the idol left the village (Kilakul., Kal), or a clan or family may 'import' Aṅkāḷamman from another place (Muc., Periak. etc.), or the temple in a particular village will be an offshoot or branch of the temple belonging to the village from which a family or clan migrated (Civar., Iru.).

A bond with Aṅkāḷamman is formed at the clan or family level and has as its base either a miracle, an extraordinary event (e.g., the pepper story of the Cettiyār or the appearance of the grinding stone etc.), or a favour granted by the goddess (e.g., the cure of an illness, the boon of a child). Many informants were not able to relate why Aṅkāḷamman had become their lineage goddess and they simply referred to it as their tradition (*paramparai*, Skt. *paramparā*).

Brenda Beck[2] cites a story which tells how the Ācāri community of the Koṅku area accepted Aṅkāḷamman as their *kula teyvam*. (Aṅkāḷamman made a wealthy and powerful government official, an Ācāri, submit to her request that he build a temple for her by bringing various misfortunes upon the first unwilling Ācāri). Beck notes: '...the clan goddess most frequently named by the relatively high-ranking left division communities,

[1] For the information I am thankful to Mr. A. Majeed, Registering Officer, Dept. of Archaeology, Tiruccirāppaḷḷi.

[2] Beck (1972), p. 99 ff.

the KōmuTTi CeTTiyār and the two Ācāri groups, was Aṅkāḷamman.'[1] According to Beck, the deities of the left-division communities 'are not associated with a particular territorial area...', whereas the deities of the right communities (foremost among them the Koṅku Kavuntar, the farming community) have strong local and territorial ties and 'protect well-defined local areas.'[2] A strict division into left and right communities with regard to Aṅkāḷamman (i.e., that she is the *kula teyvam* of only left groups) does not apply to the whole of Tamilnadu; however, Beck's point that the left-hand communities tend to be associated with deities which are not territory-bound and which are usually well-known deities of a particular pilgrimage point,[3] may serve to explain why Aṅkāḷamman temples are spread all over Tamilnadu. If Mēl-Malaiyanūr is the origin and center of the Aṅkāḷamman cult in Tamilnadu, castes which are not tied down to the cultivation of large areas of land and therefore are less settled or established and castes which by virtue of their profession travel from area to area (e.g., merchants) would have been the first to come in contact with, adopt and spread the fame of, Aṅkāḷamman. Only later would the settled, land-owning communities make the goddess their own *kula teyvam* as well. In other words, the association of locally stable and land-owning groups with Aṅkāḷamman would be a later occurrence. Many facts would indeed support such a hypothesis: groups of Cettiyār, Ācāri and Mutaliyār (all left-hand groups) were frequently seen to be the originators of an Aṅkāḷamman cult where now a right-hand group is associated with it, or where now the priestly service is performed by a member of what Beck classifies as 'neutral' group[4] (Kīḻakkulam, where the temple originally belonged to the Mutaliyār; Pērūr, Avaṉāci, Kunnattūr, Kīḻapāvūr, Irāyapuram, Īrōṭu where a Pillai, Pantāram, Kurukkal or Kavuntar serve as *pūcāri*, but where left-division communities established the temple and in some of them still are the decision-making parties). Further, lineages of left-divisions are most frequently mentioned as worshipping at the various Aṅkāḷamman temples. Much more data would be needed to prove the above theory, especially data dealing with migration and land-holding patterns of castes. It is quite obvious, however, that at least nowadays, Aṅkāḷamman is not exclusively a *kula* goddess of left-hand

[1] Beck (1972), p. 99

[2] ibid. p. 14

[3] ibid., p. 99

[4] ibid., p. 5 (table 1).

groups and that she is occasionally found associated with a particular territorial area (Teli is a case in point; the Nāyutu are farmers and the goddess protects their lands; or the Rettiyār of Tamparettipālaiyam who are farmers and who worship Aṅkālammaṉ as their *kula teyvam*.)

Of all the castes, the Cempaṭavar's claim to call Aṅkālammaṉ their *kula teyvam* is most strongly heard, she was born in their territory, into their family.

9. Cempaṭavar[1]

Myth 11 gives an account of Aṅkālammaṉ's birth to Parvatarājaṉ, who is the mythic ancestor of the Cempaṭavar (inland fishermen). A more elaborate version of the myth has as its beginning the myth of the churning of the milk ocean. The Asuras, tricked by Visnu who (as Mohinī) gave them liquor instead of the *amṛta*, went to live as fishes in the sea during the day, only to take their real form at night in order to harass the gods. The 33 crores of gods joined to become the eyes (*kaṇ*) of the net[2] and the 48'000 Ṛsis turned themselves into the weights of the net; Yama's sling (*pācam*) was the rope and Visnu's cakra the top of the net which is pulled together. Mahāvisnu built the copper boat (said to be made of the copper plates on which the Veda were inscribed) and Parvatarājaṉ was sent out to do the fishing, while Īśvarī (Aṅkālammaṉ) swallowed the fishes, so that they were not able to jump out of the net. At that time, Mīṉamaharsi, whose lower body was that of a fish, was doing *tavam* in the sea. Parvatarājaṉ mistook him for a fish and caught him. Mīnamaharsi called out: '*yār cempaṭakā* (or *cempaṭavā*)?' (who is the one in the copper boat) and cursed the king to be for ever fishing without ever catching enough fish.[3] The Cempaṭavar are the descendants of Parvatarājaṉ turned fisherman, or rather, of 'the man of the copper boat'. Two other versions of the same myth have Aṅkālammaṉ fashion a box in which the fish which Parvatarājaṉ caught were kept (Rat., Avalur.). Another myth, which connects Parvatarājaṉ to the Cempaṭavar, absorbs elements from the Daksa myth and from one of the plays (*tiruvilaiyāṭal*) of Śiva:[4]

[1] One section of the Cempaṭavar are Vaisnavas. See Thurston (1909 C&T), 'Sembadavan'; p. 350 ff.

[2] The spaces between the knots (*muṭi*) and the string of the fishing net are called Pārvatī's eyes (*kaṇ*). 60 *kaṇ* make one *māl* and 500 *māl* constitute a net.

[3] (Tiruva.). Cf. Thurston, *ibid.*, for a similar myth.

[4] No. 57., Tiruvil. *vacaṉam* (1961), p. 260, Dessigane (1960), p. 88 ff.

'parvatarājaṉ, who was a Cempaṭavar, did not have children for a long time. He did *tavam* and got the boon from Śiva that Pārvatī would be born as his daughter. Īśvarī was born as his daughter and when she reached the age to be married, she insisted on accepting nobody else but Śiva as her husband. Parvatarājaṉ said: 'Śiva is a drunkard, a madman who smokes gañjā all the time - why do you want to get married to him, find somebody else.' Īśvarī would not change her mind and argued with her father. Then she prayed to Śiva and asked him:'When will I join you, when will I be your other half?' There was a big river in the area where Parvatarājaṉ lived. Śiva called Subrahmaṇya and ordered him to take on the form of a *tirukkai miṉ*, a thorn-back fish, and not to let anyone pass over the river. Parvatarājaṉ then decreed that anyone able to catch the fish would get his daughter in marriage. Then Śiva arrived, ordered the fish to get up and change into Ṣaṇmukha again and so he was able to marry Īśvarī.' (Valpettai).

According to *tiruvilaiyāṭal* 57[1] Pārvatī is born as the daughter of the king of the Paravar and Nandin changes into a huge fish which attacks the boats of the fishermen. Śiva, in the guise of a Paravar, catches the fish and becomes re-united with Pārvatī.

Parvatarājaṉ (or Malaiyaracaṉ) is the mythic ancestor king of the Cempaṭavar, he is also the 'historical' king, in whose garden the goddess changed into a termite hill. The fish, the livelihood of the Cempaṭavar, are the link between 'reality' and 'mythology'; the mythic king, Himavat, father of Pārvatī, is cursed to become a fisherman, an 'eternal' fisherman, for his fish box will never be filled. This curse is often cited by the Cempaṭavar as a reason for their present poverty. Most Cempaṭavar cannot sustain their lives by fishing, and therefore, they try their hand at other occupations (weaving, small businesses etc.). This was also noted by Thurston.[2] (Long dry spells cause the tanks and the lake near Malaiyaṉūr to have little or no water at all).

The fish are Asuras or Rākṣasas. A similar idea is prevalent among the Baiga, for instance, who associate the image of the fish with that

[1] See footnote 4, p. 98

[2] Thurston (1909 C&T), 'Sembadavan'.

of a witch or a malevolent spirit.[1] In our myth, the fish are swallowed by the goddess, thus she destroys the Asuras. One could also interpret this to mean that the fish are sacrificial food, the food offered to the goddess (dried fish used to be, and still is today, part of the sacrificial food offered to the goddess by the fishermen), and further that (by extension) the fishermen consider their profession a sacrifice. In myth 12, the lives of the fish are offered to Brahmā. The goddess will rid the world of the malevolent forces, but in turn, she will demand a sacrifice. The fishermen, in executing their profession, have to kill life, that is, they 'sin', but by turning the killing into a sacrifice, they can think themselves absolved, because they help the goddess to keep the malevolent forces in check (the skull of Brahmā, though crushed, is not 'dead', i.e., it requires constant sacrifices). In fact, we shall see that the *kapālam* can be equated with the dark side of the goddess herself, the malevolent deity, who by means of the sacrifice, becomes the benevolent goddess.

The prerequisite to the goddess' marriage or 're-marriage' to Śiva is her conquest of the demonic forces, the 'test' she has to pass before she may return to 'heaven'. In the second version, quoted above, it is Śiva who is tested, he has to show his ability as a fisherman before he can claim the hand of a fisherman's daughter. Although this second version is closer to the Paravar's myth and although in the first version Parvatarājaṉ fishes in the sea or ocean, the Cempaṭavar make a clear disdinction between themselves and the Paravar (the sea-fishermen and former pearl divers along the Southern coast of Tamilnadu). The Cempaṭavar are inland fishermen and used to be also boatsmen (hence the copper boat) who ferried people across lakes and rivers. They do not usually fish along the sea shore and they consider the Paṭṭiṉavar, fishermen of the sea coast of Northern Tamilnadu, inferior to themselves. They call them *karaiyār* (shore people) and do not even accept water from them (Vilu.).[2]

[1] 'To dream of fish is very bad. If you sleep near a witch, if she's your enemy, she gets up in the night, pets your head and says 'Make him dance and let him see the *bhut*.' Then after 10 days you begin to dream of fish. You catch thousands and thousands, but when you come home there is nothing there. That means that you are yourself turning into a fish and become a witch, wanting to eat anything and everything. Your eyes become like a fish's eyes glaring hungrily at everything.'
'I was bathing in the river. I looked down, and there was a huge fish, large as a man, swimming silently in the water. I tried to kill it with a stone. But it swam up and down and round and round me, and I couldn't catch it. It was the *bīr* of a witch.' Elwin (1939), p. 428.

[2] Cf. Thurston (1909 C&T), 'Pattanavan'.

All the Cempaṭavar informants, whether they were able to recollect the pertinent myth or not, stated that they belong to the Parvatarāja *kulam* and that Aṅkāḷamman is their *kula teyvam*, because she was born into their family.

The Cempaṭavar live mostly in the North/South Arcot, Chengleput and parts of Salem districts (as far as Aṅkāḷamman's hair is spread). The seven Cempaṭavar families of Mēl Malaiyanūr are either (according to one informant) the descendants of one single person who lived ten generations ago, or (according to another informant) the descendants of the three brothers to whom Aṅkāḷamman revealed herself (myth 10). The families do not intermarry. They belong to the Māl gotra, have the title 'Pūcāri' and are trustees of the temple as well as *pūcāri*, each family for one year, in rotation. The Cempaṭavar of Rāṭāpuram also have the title 'Pūcāri'; both, the Cempaṭavar of Mēl Malaiyanūr and those of Rāṭāpuram wear a *liṅkam* (*liṅga*). Usually only one male in the family wears the *liṅkam* and it has to be put on specifically when the goddess is undressed and dressed; when they wear the *liṅkam* they identify themselves with Śiva: only Śiva is allowed to dress and undress the goddess. Cempaṭavar who do not wear the *liṅkam* can be *pūcāri* (i.e., have priestly functions) as well, e.g., the Nāṭṭār are *pūcāri* in the following temples: Cintāṭirippēṭṭai (Mdr), Tintivaṇam, Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, Viḻuppuram, Vāḻajāpeṭṭai, Vāḻacāpāṭ, Cāṭṭaṇūr. Nāṭṭār is a title.[1] The Cempaṭavar Pūcāri of Rāṭāpuram say, that their forefathers were given the *liṅkam* by Guru Kukainamacivāyar (Namacivāyar of the cave) from Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. He was supposed to have been a famous holy man. One ascetic called Namaśivāya, a Vīraśaiva, did in fact live in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. 'The Namasivaya Guhai (*kukai* - 'cave') contains an inscription on a rock, recording the death in A.D. 1497 of an ascetic called Namasivaya, who probably lived in the cave.'[2] If this very same Namaśivāya was the guru of the Cempaṭavar, it would explain why a faction of them wears the *liṅkam*. The oldest of the *pūcāri* (there are eight Cempaṭavar who are *pūcāri* at the Rāṭāpuram temple) also maintained that it was they (the Cempaṭavar) who used to perform the priestly functions at the Aruṇācala temple of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. I was not able to find out if

[1] Thurston (1909 C&T), 'Sembadavan', p. 352, lists as further titles: Kavuṇṭaṇ, Maṇiyakkāraṇ, Pakuttar and Piḷḷai.

[2] Dr. R. Champalakshmi, 'The Tiruvannamalai Inscriptions', in ATKS (1976), p. 113, cf. also p. 381-82.

this was true, however, the Cempaṭavar still hold certain rights in connection with the festivals at the Aruṇācala temple.

The *kārttikai tīpam*, the holy fire on top of the Aruṇācala mountain, is still today prepared and lit each year by the Cempaṭavar of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (the Cempaṭavar of the Vātai gotra): The big vessel, the ghee, camphor and cloth for the *tīpam* (the lamp or light) are supplied by the Aruṇācala temple. Ten to fifteen Cempaṭavar, who have been fasting, do *pūcai* at the temple, and each receives a dhoti which is wrapped around his head as a sign of honour. They bring all these things to the mountain top and make the lamp ready. When a plate of fire is waved in the temple below, the fishermen light the lamp on top of the mountain. They keep the fire burning (by feeding it with ghee) for the number of days specified.[1] In one manuscript of the *Aruṇācala māhātmya*[2] it is stated that Śaṅkarācārya introduced the custom of having the Cempaṭavar light the fire on the hill: When Aruṇācala's light on the mountain was not visible for a while, the priests worried, since without the light, the greatness of the temple would be lost. Śaṅkarācārya told them that they had to light the fire themselves, but they refused, believing that if they climbed the holy mountain, they would incur a great sin. Seeing some Cempaṭavar fishing at a lake nearby, Śaṅkarācārya thought that these men, who kill fish, would not worry about sinning if they were told to climb the mountain, and so he told them that they should light the fire on top. The Cempaṭavar agreed. They did a '*cakra pūjā*', took ghee, flowers, sandal paste (*cantaṉam*) etc. with them and lit the fire on top of the mountain.

Another right which the Cempaṭavar apparently have in the ritual complex of the Arunācala temple is during the Tai (Jan.-Feb.) festival. When Śiva is brought around the streets in procession, the Cempaṭavar stage a mock-robbery and steal the god's jewels (Tiruva.).[3] Thus far, I have not come across any historical evidence[4] which could fournish any clues as

[1] This information was provided by Mr. Subramaniam, Annāmalai Press, Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, who himself participates in the lighting of the fire.

[2] *Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Kōyiṟ Kaipītu* D. 2777, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras. This may correspond to the Mackenzie Manuscript No. 58, Mahalingam (1972), p. 246.

[3] The story goes that Bhṛṅgī did severe *tavam* which made Śiva decide to appear before him. Pārvatī, fearing robbers on the way, did not want to let Śiva go out. Śiva did go out, promptly got robbed and was punished by the goddess by being locked out. She told him to get back his jewellery, otherwise she would not let him inside the temple. Śiva made a deal with the robbers, received back the ornaments and was let back into the temple.

[4] The Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondichéry, is in the process of copying and publishing all the inscriptions on the Aruṇācala temple. Maybe one of them does indeed contain a reference to the Cempaṭavar.

to why the fishermen hold such hereditary rights (the Cempatavar themselves of course refer to their mythological connection to Śiva), however, considering that they have certain hereditary rights in the Citamparam temple as well,[1] one may presume that, at one point in history, the Cempatavar were either an influencial force in the area, or that they had much closer ties to these temples than they do now. The Cempatavar's connection to the Aruṇācala temple has another link, again one which superimposes history on mythology: Vallālakantaṉ or Vallālarājaṉ of myth 3 is said to have been the Vallāla who built one of the *kōpuram* of the Aruṇācala temple. The *kōpuram* referred to is the Vallāla *kōpuram* erected during the Hoysaḷa period and called after Vīra Ballāla or Ballāla III who ruled in the area in the first part of the 14th century.[2]

The Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, as already noted, is acknowledged to be the oldest and most famous. Some Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples are specifically referred to as off-springs of the temple in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, and during the time of the big festival in Māci, families from surrounding areas as far as Poḷḷācci Taluk (Coimbatore district) come to Mēl Malaiyaṉūr to collect the *tīrttam* to be used for the celebration at their own temples. The majority of all informants in districts North of Madurai knew about the temple in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, and they were familiar with the myth of Vallāḷarājaṉ. We can presume that the cult of Aṅkāḷammaṉ began in Malaiyaṉūr, but its date is lost in the misty horizon of mythology. Anywhere between 300 and 500 years ago Aṅkāḷammaṉ's fame must have started to grow and spread, leading other communities to make her their guardian and to set up temples for her. Yet, the Cempatavar say that Aṅkāḷammaṉ can only be *their kula*

[1] 'The Sembadavans at Chidambaram are all śaivites and point out with pride their connection with the temple. It appears that, on a particular day, they are deputed to carry the idol in procession through the streets, and their services are paid for with a modest fee and a ball of cooked rice for each person. Some respect is shown to them by the temple authorities, as the goddess, when being carried in procession, is detained for some time in their quarters, and they make presents of female cloths to the idol.' Thurston (1909 C&T), 'Sembadavan', p. 353.
Even today, in the month of Āṉi (June-July), the big chariot of the god stops in their quarter and they offer *pūcai*, and in Mārkaḷi (Dec.-Jan.) the Cempatavar worship the goddess in the looo-pillared *maṇṭapam*. This was confirmed by a priest of the Citamparam temple, who gave as a reason the fishermen's claim that the goddess was born into their family (he referred then to the Paravar myth!). The Cempatavar of Citamparam say that they belong to the Parvatarāja *kulam*.

[2] Cf. ATKS (1976), p. 372 and 378 and Coelho (1950), p. 239. Ballāla (Tamil: Vallāla) resided in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in AD 1318, 1328, 1341, 1342 and 1343. See also below, ch. III,B.2.3.3.

teyvam, since she was born into their family; they are rather possessive of her and will not readily give other communities a share in the festival.[1] In all the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples belonging to Cempaṭavar they themselves are *pūcāri*. In the Vāḷācapāṭ temple an Aiyar Brahmin performs certain *pūcai* and decorates the idol during the festival, but he does not take part in the procession of the goddess through the streets nor in the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. His presence in this temple is somewhat surprising, since the goddess is considered to be *acutta*. In the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple a Kurukkaḷ boy is in charge of the decoration of the goddess. On the one hand, the Cempaṭavar feel obliged to carry on their tradition and the responsibility in maintaining the temple and regular service to the goddess, while on the other hand, they sometimes consider it a burden to do so without the help of other communities. Although they are reluctant to relinquish their hereditary rights, they do welcome all other castes to worship at their temples.

A last note on the castes which worship Aṅkāḷammaṉ: Since we shall shortly discuss the ritual called *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* (pillaging of the cremation ground), it may not be out of place to mention *en passant* that at least half of the castes mentioned bury their dead. The Pūcāri section of the Cempaṭavar bury their dead in a sitting posture, whereas the Nāṭṭār bury them lying down (Valpettai, Valpt.). Others who bury their dead in a sitting posture are: Liṅgāyats (Kovai), Pantāram (Culur), Tēvar (Iru.), Mutaliyār (Muc.); others who bury (not sitting up) are: Vaṉṉiyar (Omal., Tanc., Cit.), Ceṭṭiyār (Virap.) and those who do both, either burial or burning (the latter if they can afford it) are: Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār (Kilapa.), Piḷḷaimār (Ura.), Tēvar (Mad.Rl.). Those who cremate their dead are: Veḷḷāḷar (Mad.Gu.), Teluṅku and Kōmaṭṭi Ceṭṭiyār (Tri-U., Kal.), Tēvar (Kilakul.). These facts are relevant since most communities who fashion a figure in the cremation ground for the annual *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* ritual are communities who bury their dead, therefore, the figure is made with ashes of the dead belonging to other communities.

[1] For instance, whereas in the festival notices of Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples not in the hands of Cempaṭavar various castes are listed as donors, trustees, etc., the notices of the Cempaṭavar do not mention any other community. In Vāḷājāpeṭṭai a Kavuṇṭar and a Harijan community also celebrate the Māci *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*, and they each make their own figure in the cremation ground, so that during the festival there are three separate figures. The Cempaṭavar of this town consider the Kavuṇṭar and Harijans as imitators and their celebration definitely inferior to that of the Cempaṭavar.

III. THE FESTIVAL (*tiruvilā*)

A. The core rituals

The character of a god/goddess finds its fullest expression during the festival. The ceremony/ies performed are made up of rituals which reveal the deity's essential nature. Nevertheless, the multi-faceted and often similar character of South Indian deities allows for one and the same ritual to be an important part of the ceremonies for different deities, for instance, the walking-over-hot-coals ritual (*kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*). Regardless of the rituals which are common for various deities, or, regardless of those elements in a ritual which assert that different deities can share particular features, there may be a ritual, or elements in a ritual which make it possible to distinguish one deity from another and which, if these are persistent for the same deity in a number of places, give that deity a particular mark.

When we look at the festival procedures of roughly 60 Aṅkāḷamman temples in Tamilnadu, we are able to distinguish particular rituals (and elements) which recur in one form or another (forming variations on one theme), while other rituals turn up only sporadically (local phenomena). The emphasis in this chapter will be on those rituals (of the yearly festival) which all Aṅkāḷamman temples have in common - which I shall call *core rituals*. They are rituals (since they are persistent) which will best characterize the goddess. Before we describe the core rituals, something will be said about the time of the festival and the place of the core rituals within the ritual complex. A chart will provide the reader with an idea of the types of rituals that make up the body of the festival and the sequence in which the rituals are performed. Following the descriptions of the core rituals, some of the reasons responsible for the variations will be looked into. The analysis of the major elements of the core rituals shall end section A. (The term 'element' will be used to mean a particular component of the ritual, an object or act which, through its symbolic significance, adds to the meaning of or provides a meaning for the ritual.)

1. The time of the festival

A temple may celebrate one or more festivals a year or one festival every second or third (etc.) year. Which festivals, if there are more than one, and for how many days each festival is celebrated, depends on the wealth of the community and the wealth of the temple. The main brunt of the festival expense will be on the community/ies whose *kula teyvam* is Aṅkāḷamman - and as we have seen, often a member of this community will act as *pūcāri*. The wealth of a temple depends to a large extent on the fame of the particular goddess and the fame, in turn, is often measured by the expense paid for a festival. Economically bad years (drought, flood) also play a part. Temples which are wealthy (and these are also the ones which tend to become 'brahmanized', i.e., goddess and attendants will be *cutta*, the identification of the goddess with Pārvatī will be stronger, the *pūcāri* will be a Pantāram or Kurukkal) will often, apart from the 'obligatory' festival, celebrate other festivals in imitation of the famous Śiva temples: *kārttikai tīpam, navarāttiri* etc. The main and most important festival for all temples is, however, the one on *makācivaṉrāttiri*. Sometimes it is also called *mayāṉakkollai uṟcavam* (*utsava*).

Roughly 80 % of all Aṅkāḷamman temples in Tamilnadu celebrate the *mayāṉakkollai uṟcavam* in the month of Māci (Feb.-March), for one or more days (up to 15 days), starting with the *makācivaṉrāttiri* day or a few days prior to it. 20 % of the temples hold their annual festival in other months, for example in Tai (Jan.-Feb.), Paṅkuṉi (March-Apr.), Vaikāci (May-June).

From a few examples, we shall see that the core rituals remain the same, regardless of the month in which the annual festival takes place.

2. The rituals and their sequence

Below is a presentation of the rituals and their sequence. As a basic pattern we have chosen the festivals of Aṅkāḷamman temples in the Coimbatore district, since they contain the greatest variety of rituals.[1]

[1] See section D for some of the rituals not discussed as part of the core rituals.

Table II

1	2
a) Flag hoisting *kotiyēṟṟutal* b) Tying of *kaṅkanam kaṅkaṇam kaṭṭutal*	a) Bringing of sacred water (*tīrttam*) b) Decorating the sacred vessel (*karakam*)

3	4
a) Going around streets with *kapparai* b) Making of figure in cremation ground	a) *mayāṇakkollai* b) Destruction of Daksa

5	6	7
a) 'Tests' (*pariṭcai*) b) *alaku niṟuttal* c) Bathing or floating of goddess on water (*teppam* or *nīr āṭutal*)	Walking over hot coals *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*	hunt *pārivēṭṭai*

8	9
a) Chariot (*tēr*) b) *teppam āṭutal*	a) Turmeric bath (*mañcaḷ nīr āṭutal*) b) Taking down of flag c) Removing of *kaṅkanam*

10	11
pillaippāvu	Pēcci *pūjā* (*pūcai*)

Numbers one and two mark the beginning of the festival. Three, four and ten are the core rituals. Numbers five to eight are not performed in all temples (e.g., the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* is limited to temples in the Coimbatore area). Numbers eight and nine show the end of the festival. Ten and eleven are rituals performed for Pēcci. The *pillaippāvu* is part of the core rituals and is in some cases an integral part of the *mayāṇakkoḷḷai*. Numbers three and four constitute a larger unit in that the rituals in three may serve as a preliminary to the rituals in four. The same holds for numbers five and six. Where ritual 4 b is performed, it replaces 4 a (Viraṉ) or 3 a and b and 4 a (Tirunelveli district). Above we have listed the major rituals performed in Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples, i.e., we have not included those rituals which, though they may be important to a particular temple, are of minor importance in the realm of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ

cult as a whole (e.g., a marriage ceremony of the goddess with Śiva, which is performed probably in less than five % of the temples).

3. Description of the core rituals

Since most temples celebrate the *mayāṉakkoṭṭai uṟcavam* at the same time, the foreign researcher who spends a limited time in India is not able to witness for himself as many performances of the celebration as he would like to. The following three descriptions of the core rituals are based on my own observations. The descriptions of the rituals, which shall follow the present three examples, are based on the information supplied by informants (an exception being the *mayāṉakkoṭṭai* as it is performed in Tiṉṭivaṉam which is partly based on my own observations).

3.1. Vālācāpāṭ (Walajabad)

Vālācāpāṭ is a small town about half-way on the road leading from Ceṅkaṟpaṭṭu to Kāñcīpuram. The Aṅkāḷamman temple is situated on a side street off the main road of the town. It is the Cempaṭavar community which is primarily responsible for the temple, the goddess and the festival. The *pūcāri* are Cempaṭavar.

a. Making the figure in the cremation ground

(Three days before *makācivaṉrāttiri* the flag pole was installed.)[1] It consisted of a long bamboo pole on top of which were mango leaves. On *makācivaṉrāttiri* day the figure in the cremation ground was made. On that day, a party of about eight people left the temple to go to the cremation ground (*mayāṉam*) which is about a mile away from the temple and near the river bed. It was about 12 o'clock noon. The informant (the chief *pūcāri*) carried a giant umbrella whose only function, seemingly, was to provide some shade for the people while the figure was made. The other *pūcāri* carried the plate containing the usual items for the *pūcai*: flowers, incense, bananas, a coconut, sacred ashes. The other people of the group were two *pampaikkārar*, one drummer with the *uṭukkai* and a few boys carrying pots. Upon arrival at the cremation ground, a particular spot was chosen. It was

[1] Some of the information is based on a conversation with the chief *pūcāri* held on 1.8.81. Information not based on my own observation will be put in brackets. The festival described took place in Māci, 1982.

a heap of stones, earth and ashes (the remains of a recently burned body). A small flag, about 1 1/2 m high and made of a white cloth which had been soaked in turmeric water, was placed at the head of the heap. One of the *pampaikkārar* began by carving a rough shape out of the heap with the spade: a head (towards the south), two arms, two legs slightly bent. Earth (clay) mixed with water, brought in pots, was added to the figure to give it a more solid shape. The eyes, a mouth, a tongue sticking out, and a nose were then formed. (Usually chicken-eggs are used as eyes, but the previous year somebody had stolen the eggs, that is why it was thought preferable to make the eyes with clay this year).[1] Two breasts were shaped on the figure's chest, and, around the head, matted hair (*caṭai*) flowing in streaks, was formed. A sword with a lime on its tip was placed standing upright on its hilt on the left side of the figure. Six cones were made of clay; four of them, called Pillaiyār, were put on the lap, i.e., between the legs of the figure; one called Kāttavarāyaṉ was placed below the figure's feet, while another cone, Pāvāṭairāyaṉ, was put at the right side below the figure's arm. (The Pillaiyār are usually placed around the figure, but the previous year someone had tripped on them, therefore they were put on her lap). A string was then tied around the figure; first it was tied around the cones, then around the whole figure and fastened by stones. *Vipūti* was applied on the forehead of the figure. With red *kuṅkumam* powder a *poṭṭu* was made on the forehead, *kuṅkumam* was also sprinkled on the mouth, nostrils and chest of the figure and on each of the cones. Small pieces of bones, which had been removed from the heap at the beginning, became the teeth of the figure. Then the figure and the Pillaiyār were decorated with flowers. The figure thus finished was called Pārvatī! The whole figure, stretched out and facing the sky, measured about 3 1/2 to 4 m in length. The drum was played, a *pūcai* was done, and then the *kaṅkaṇam* (the protective bracelet) was tied on the wrists of the informant, the other *pūcāri* and the *pampaikkārar*. A *kaṅkaṇam* was laid around the figure's neck and around each of the cones. Following this, puffed rice (pori) was thrown onto the figure and the rest distributed to the group of people as *piracātam*. This concluded the ceremony. Then the party left, taking along the *pūcai* plate, the sword, the pots and the umbrella. The flag remained there.

[1] The guilty person had never admitted his theft, and as a result, he had died within three months. Had he admitted his fault, some mantras (*mantiram*) could have been chanted on his behalf, and he would not have died. (According to chief *pūcāri*.)

b. Giving life to the figure in the cremation ground.

During the evening of the same day (*makācivaṉrāttiri*) a *pūṅkarakam* (a pot decorated with margosa leaves and flowers), representing Aṅkāḷammaṉ, was made at the river by one of the *pampaikkārar*. The goddess, i.e., the *uṟcava mūrtti*, together with a Śiva *liṅkam* which was placed beside her, was brought to the river on a cart (*vākaṉam*). A *tīpārātaṉai*[1] was performed in front of the *karakam* and the pot was then placed on the *vākaṉam*, in front of the goddess. During the whole night, until about 5 A.M., the goddess went in procession around the streets. She would stop in front of various houses for a short *pūcai*. The *pampaikkārar* who had prepared the *karakam*, the chief *pūcāri* and various other people were dancing in front of the *vākaṉam*, each carrying on his head, for a while, another *karakam* over which had been fastened a huge umbrella-like structure of bamboo decorated with flowers. Shortly before midnight, the chief *pūcāri*, together with the two *pampaikkārar*, came back to the temple - the goddess continued her procession. The chief *pūcāri* changed into a yellow dhoti. He kneeled in front of a big earthen pot which contained rice flour paste and a camphor light; over the mouth of the pot a big leaf (*mantāram* leaf) was attached, sticking up like a sail (this was to prevent the light from being blown out on the way to the cremation ground). The *pampaikkārar* played, and, at the shouts of a handful of people, the *pūcāri* picked up the pot and started to run in the direction of the cremation ground (the informant, i.e., the *pūcāri*, called it *maruḷ ōṭa*[2]). On the way, the possessed *pūcāri* went into fits, his body contorted and it seemed as if he were going to fall on the ground; at this moment the *pampaikkārar* rubbed some *vipūti* on the forehead of the possessed *pūcāri*, who then resumed walking at a fast pace towards the cremation ground. Close to it, he started to run fast. He ran half way around the figure and fell down flat at Pārvatī's head, placing the pot down close to her head. Then, with charcoal, the figure's eyes were given pupils, i.e., life. A lime was cut, followed by a cock (it had to be a good cock, one that crows at the right time), blood from its severed neck was sprinkled into Pārvatī's mouth, its head lying at her feet. Some blood was also mixed with rice which had been brought, by one of the *pampaikkārar*, in a winnowing fan. This blood-rice was thrown up into the air. Everyone then sat at the goddess' feet, the *pampaikkārar* played the drums and sang; then a *pūcai* was performed, and everyone received *piracātam* from the

[1] Skt. *dīpārādhana*, worship by circling a light before the deity.

[2] *maruḷ* - literally: 'delusion, bewilderment'. Used to describe the kind of power and frenzy which takes hold of the *pūcāri*. *ōṭa* - 'to run'.

pot (i.e., the rice-flour paste). The *pūcāri* then asked everyone to leave, except the older of the *pampaikkārar*. He produced two to three limes which he and the *pampaikkārar* buried in the sides of the figure. (Whoever would find these limes during the *mayāṉakkollai* would be very lucky - the limes are potent remedies, especially against evil spirits). That was the end of the ritual.

c. *mayāṉakkollai* ('pillage', 'plunder' in the cremation ground)

The next morning (day of *amāvācai*) the Brahmin priest decorated the *uṟcava mūrtti* with 16 arms and a trident.[1] The goddess' lion vehicle (*ciṅka vākaṉam*) was also decorated and placed on top of a cart which was later pulled by two bullocks. Some men, who had made vows to this effect, dressed themselves as Kāli (*Kāli vēsam*): they wore saris, painted their faces red or black, tied long open hair on their heads and wore papier-mâché crowns. One of them held a goat liver in his mouth and carried a pot in which a fire was kept burning (*tīccaṭṭi*). Two boys fulfilled their vows by having limes sown onto their backs and chests; they then walked around on stilts. The *kapparai* was also made ready in the temple. This particular *kapparai*[2] had three red faces side by side, each with a big black moustache and a crown. The faces were made of wood. Below the faces was tied an earthen pot containing the following: rice flour mixed with jaggery, betel leaves, bananas, coins (9 *kācu*) and a coconut. The pot was covered with a yellow cloth. The three faces of the *kapparai* represent the faces of Brahmā.[3] Before the procession started, devotees offered, i.e., broke, coconuts in front of the *vākaṉam*. (A lime and a pumpkin are offered as a sacrifice in the temple and lastly, a cock is sacrificed). Some of the cock's blood was mixed with the rice which one *pampaikkārar* carried in a winnowing fan. Some of the blood was daubed on the chief *pūcāri*'s forehead and mouth, while he was kneeling in front of the sanctum, holding the *kapparai*. ('When the Amman sees the blood, she becomes like a mad dog, she

[1] Here the trident pointed upwards, but in similar *alaṅkāram* for the *mayāṉakkollai* the trident pointed downwards. The goddess was most probably decorated as Durgā-mahiṣāsuramardinī.

[2] The *kapparai* is a structure made of bamboo or wood on which 1, 3 or 5 faces are fastened. The face or faces can be made with winnowing fans, of wood or metal. The *kapparai* is sometimes simply called *mukam* (*mukha* - face) or *mukakkapparai*.

[3] The informant called it Pirammatēvar and Mummūrtti. He may have associated the term Mummūrtti with Brahmā's three heads, since he later specifically said, that Brahmā has three heads. We shall see that in some cases the three heads are said to represent the Mummūrtti, i.e., Brahmā, Śiva, Viṣṇu.

will go to the cremation ground in a frenzy - *veṟi*[1] and with blood *śakti - utira cakti*.') The *pūcāri* stood up, holding the *kapparai*, and went once around the sanctum (*pradakṣiṇa*), dancing. Then the procession started on its way to the cremation ground. First were the men dressed up as Kāli, followed by the *kapparai*, at the end came the goddess on the *vākaṉam*. The *pampaikkārar* who carried the rice mixed with blood - the body of the pro-sacrificed cock lay on top of it - stayed close to the *kapparai*; he protected it. Every time someone came too close to the *kapparai*, he sprinkled some of the blood-rice on that person. Once in a while the *pūcāri* who carried the *kapparai* showed signs of losing control, i.e., he would shake and seem to fall any second; then blood-rice was applied on his forehead.

From the main road a small sand path turned off to the cremation ground. Around the figure a big crowd, mostly of women, had gathered. When the *vākaṉam* just about reached the turn-off spot - it would remain there during the *kollai* - the *pūcāri* started to run at fast speed towards the figure. He fell at the figure's head and deposited the *kapparai* there. At that moment the crowd shouted and the things which people had brought along, mostly drumsticks (*muruṅkaikkāy*), tamarind and *koḷukkattai*, were thrown up into the air, and then a big scramble ensued over the figure, everyone picking up as much of the earth, ashes etc. of the figure as possible. Within a few minutes nothing was left of Pārvatī. The *pūcāri* had returned to the *vākaṉam* with the *kapparai*. A *tipārataṉai* followed. Then the *pūcāri* distributed the ashes which he had brought from the figure. The yellow flag, which had stood at the figure's head, had also been taken away. (A new flag is made each year). The ashes and earth of the figure are powerful remedies against evil spirits, illnesses, barrenness; they are also buried in the field to assure a good crop.

(Notes on the *kapparai*: the informant (*pūcāri*) stressed the importance of the *kapparai*. Only he and members of his community, i.e., Cempaṭavar, are allowed to carry it, and it is always the same person who carries it at the beginning of the procession and while running to the cremation ground. As long as the *kapparai* is in the sight of the goddess, it should not change hands. 'When he, i.e., the person who carries the *kapparai*, runs to the *mayāṉam*, nobody can stop him; anyone coming in his way would be carried along. The *kapparai* has to be placed at the head of the figure. It is the *kapparai* which throws him onto the figure. It throws him onto

[1] *veṟi* - 'drunkenness, madness, frenzy, anger'.

the head, chest or neck of the figure. The Amman then lifts him up and puts him down at her head, where he places the *kapparai*. The *pampaikkārar* sing the praises of the goddess and when they sing about the eating of raw bodies (*paccai pinattai tinratu* - a reference to the goddess), a sign is given and the *kollai*[1] is done. From the stomach of the figure the ashes are taken. Nobody will touch the figure prior to the *kollai* - if he does, he will vomit blood. Only after the *kollai* is *tīparatanai* done, never before,' i.e., during the procession to the cremation ground. The cock (*cēval*) which has been sacrificed, is later given to the *pampaikkārar*. The rice flour paste in the pot under the *kapparai* is distributed to the *paṅkāli* (agnate relations) of the *pūcāri*, to those closely associated with the temple and to important people. Only those who are ritually pure, i.e., fast, drink only milk, sleep in the temple, and who are married, are allowed to carry the *kapparai*.)

d. After the *mayānakkollai*

The next day in the evening, the goddess was placed on a swing (*ūñcal*) in front of the sanctum. Three sets of food had been prepared consisting of chicken-, goat- and fish curry, vegetables: brinjal (*kattirikai*), green spinach-type leaves (*kīrai*), drumsticks (*muruṅkaikkāy*) and a sweet dish (*kolukkattai*). On top of the rice a lamp of rice flour paste (*māvilakku*) was placed. One set was laid out in the sanctum - this would be for the *pūcāri* and their family; one portion was in front of the goddess on the swing - this would be given to the public, and one set was near the entrance of the temple, for the *pampaikkārar*. (Before the food is distributed, the *pampaikkārar* sing and the public can ask questions of people who get possessed. The goddess will be asked, through a possessed person, if the festival has been conducted to her satisfaction. On the following day, the turmeric bath of the goddess concludes the festival.)

3.2. Teli

Teli lies at a distance of about 10 km from Viluppuram, in the direction of Tirukkōyilūr. The Aṅkāḷamman temple is the only big temple of the village. The *pūcāri* is a Nāyuṭu. The annual festival in 1982 started on the fourth day after Paṅkuni *amāvācai* and ended a day before *paurṇami* (pūrṇimā). On the third, fourth and fifth day of the festival a *kapparai* was carried

[1] *kollai* - the 'pillage, robbery'.

around the streets. The *kapparai* of the third day consists of a big black earthen pot, which contains a *māvilakku* and on which two faces (one on each side) are shaped with flour. The person (a Nāyuṭu) who carries the pot will have his face painted to represent the third face. The three faces are those of Brahmā. On the fourth day, a *pūvaḷai kapparai* (*pū* -'flower', *vaḷai* - 'circle') is made. It is a big ball of flowers on top of a stick. Below the flower ball, counted as one face, is hung the earthen pot with the two faces. Together with the face of the person who carries the *kapparai* there are thus four faces. On the fifth day a *kapparai* of wood is taken around the streets. This *kapparai*, similar to the one described for Vāḷācāpāṭ, is a wooden beam upon which are three faces one beside the other. The faces have a wooden base on which the flour is molded. As eyes, chicken eggs are used (each face has three eyes); the faces are painted. Below this structure hangs again the black pot and together these are five faces. All the faces, or heads, i.e, the three, four and five, are those of Brahmā. The third day (the three faces) corresponds to Śiva's act of plucking one of Brahmā's heads. The fourth day *kapparai* portrays Śiva's madness, his roaming about in the world followed by brahminicide. The *kapparai* of five heads corresponds to Śiva's release from the skull. The *kapparai* is destroyed at the back side of the temple (it should actually be destroyed in the cremation ground, but for convenience's sake - the cremation ground is too far away - this is done in the temple). The faces are wiped off, the wooden structure and the empty black pot are kept in the temple.[1] As explanation for these rituals, myth 12 is told.

On the sixth day of the festival, the *kuṭal piṭuṅki māḷai* (pulling out the intestines and wearing them as garlands) ceremony is performed.[2] That evening three men got dressed up. One man (a Kavuṇṭar), when he was cured from an illness, had made a life-long vow to get dressed up as Kāṭṭēri. His face was painted black, he wore a black sari and long open hair.[3] The second man, related to the *pūcāri*, put on the costume of Pāvaṭairāyaṉ. He wore a triple skirt, a crown, golden epaulettes. His

[1] The information on the three *kapparai* was provided by the *pūcāri*.

[2] In other places this ritual is called *pillaippāvu*.

[3] Open hair connotes a liminal state, hence it signifies the goddess' powerful, dangerous, creative/destructive aspect. Cf. Hiltebeitel (1981), p. 179-214.

face was painted red and black and a huge moustache gave him a fierce appearance. He carried a shield and a sword. The third man, a brother of the *pūcāri*, was dressed up as Aṅkāḷammaṉ. His face was painted red, he wore a white sari. On his shoulders were huge wing-like epaulettes. On his head he wore a cone-shaped crown from the top of which a white cloth fell like a veil. The *pūcāri* and the three men thus arrayed proceeded to the back side of the temple. Kāṭṭēri brought a big round vessel in which was flour mixed with turmeric and lime which made the mass of flour look like blood. Another pot was brought, containing the cleaned and blown-up intestines of a goat. The intestines were covered with the red flour paste, then gathered and tied at one end with a cloth. Aṅkāḷammaṉ then picked up the intestines and put them into her mouth at the gathered end, while the rest of the intestines lay in a winnowing fan in which there had been put some of the red flour as well. A goat liver had also been brought, one end of which Kāṭṭēri took into her mouth. A small wooden doll, about 30 cm in length, was then placed on the ground in front of the two 'goddesses'. Some of the 'blood' was daubed onto the doll's head, belly and arms. A small *pūcai* was then performed. As the *pūcāri* raised the *pūcai* plate, everyone shouted, and at that moment Kāṭṭēri and Aṅkāḷammaṉ started to dance. Pāvāṭairāyaṉ joined them, and the three danced once around the temple. Meanwhile, the wooden doll had been deposited on the platform of the Nandin statue facing the sanctum. (This ritual of pulling out the intestines should be performed in the cremation ground, but is, for the reason given above, performed at the back of the temple).[1] While Aṅkāḷammaṉ danced in the temple compound, women, who wished to have children, came to pour milk over the winnowing fan which Aṅkāḷammaṉ carried. They poured the milk over the intestines and drank it, as it flowed out. Kāṭṭēri danced with the liver in her mouth. She held the pot containing the red flour paste. The dancers then joined the goddess who was on her *vākaṉam* - the *uṟcava mūrtti* had two arms, one hand held a trident pointing at a figure lying beneath her. Red threads, representing the intestines, connected the goddess' mouth with this figure. The procession then started to move along the streets: first came the *paṟai* drummers, then a group of transvestites who danced with a *karakam* on their heads, followed by the dressed up men (Kāṭṭēri, Aṅkāḷammaṉ and Pāvāṭairāyaṉ) and finally the goddess on her *vākaṉam*. The procession stopped in front of each house

1 *pūcāri*'s information.

for *pūcai;* the *pūcāri*, accompanied by the *pampai*, sang about the goddess' exploits (myth 3 and 12); devotees donated money, and the procession moved on. This went on for the whole night and the procession reached the temple only shortly before dawn. The explanation offered by the *pūcāri* for the *kuṭal piṭuṅki mālai* ritual, was myth 3.

On the seventh day an *akkiṇi karakam* and on the eighth day a *puṅ-karakam* were taken around the streets. The *akkiṇi karakam* is an earthen pot containing fire. The *pūcāri* carries it on his head and devotees pour ghee into it to keep the fire burning. The *pūcāri* explained, that the fire in the pot burns all the pollution or sin (*pāvam*) which the goddess incurred when she destroyed the *piramakapālam* and when she tore open the queen's stomach. On the ninth day, the big chariot, the *tēr*, was pulled through the streets, and the festival ended with the *mañcaḷ nīr āṭutal*. All these festivities took place at night, including the *tēr* procession.

3.3. Āṇaimalai

The next description takes us to the Coimbatore district. About 15 km SW of Pollācci lies the small town called Āṇaimalai. The Mācāniyammaṇ temple is located at the outskirts of the town and close to the river Āli.[1] As far as I was able to find out, there is no Aṅkālammaṇ temple nearby, and the priests of the Mācāniyammaṇ temple did not connect the goddess with Aṅkālammaṇ. The temple is a fairly new one, built in 1925 by the family of one A.S. Kṛsnasvāmikurukkaḷ; the present priests are from this same family. A Kavuntar[2] related that it was his father who had discovered the original figure of the goddess in the midst of thorn bushes. He had cleared the area around the figure and had started to worship the goddess. This took place more than 70 years ago. I was not able to find out who had made the figure in the first place. According to the *pampaikkārar*, the making of the big figure in the cremation ground had been started by his family.[3] Regardless of the origin of the temple and its present mytho-

[1] A short article on this temple was published in the Tamil magazine *Maṅkai* of Oct. 1981.

[2] Mr. Vēluccāmi Kavuntar. He still has an important role during the festival.

[3] Previous to this only a small 10 cm figure used to be made by the Kurukkal priests. Once during the *pūcai*, a member of the *pampaikkārar*'s family got possessed by the goddess and demanded that a member of his family should make the figure and that it should be made according to their way. Since then this family has been in charge of modelling the figure.

logical link with Rāma, the *mayāṉa pūcai* as it is now performed, can clearly be related to the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. Other indications which make a connection between this Mācāṇiyammaṉ and Macāṇiyammaṉ of other places and with the cult of Aṅkāḷammaṉ possible are the following: When the *pampaikkārar* sings the *varalāṟu* of Mācāṇiyammaṉ during the *mayāṉa pūcai*, he starts with Aṅkāḷammaṉ's appearance on earth, her travel to Tāyaṉūr and her settling in Malaiyaṉūr. In a song to Mācāṇiyammaṉ, her festival is said to take place during the month of Māci (i.e., the usual time of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ festival).[1] (The festival is celebrated in Tai.)

Mācāṇiyammaṉ, in her four to five meters' length, lays stretched out facing the sky. In her right upper hand is the *uṭukkai* with the snake in the tapered middle. Her lower right holds a trident. The left top holds a snake and in her bottom hand is the *kapālam*. Her hair sticks out in *caṭai* like flames. On her forehead is a mirror.[2] At her feet crouches a small figure, said to be a Rākṣasa (*arakkar*). All over the inside of the walls surrounding the sanctum are paintings which depict the goddess' myth and also scenes of the walking-over-hot-coals ritual. The myth is as follows: Rāma, on his way to Laṅkā, stopped here. In order to get the necessary power to conquer Rāvaṇa, he fashioned a figure from clay (*maṇ*) in the cremation ground and did *pūcai* to the figure. The goddess, Mācāṇiyammaṉ, appeared to him and gave him her *cakti* (power); then she told him not to destroy the figure he had made. The figure is Mācāṇiyammaṉ.

a. The festival, *mayāṉa pūcai*

In the month of Tai (Jan.-Feb.), on *amāvācai*, the flag is hoisted. On the night of the 14th day of the festival the *pūcai* in the cremation ground takes place. For this *pūcai* a huge figure, modelled after Mācāṇiyammaṉ, is made in the cremation ground. The cremation ground lies about 1 1/2 km away from the temple towards the other side of the town. The *pampaikkārar*, with the help of his son, had begun to make the figure in the afternoon. With clay he shaped the head, body and limbs of the goddess, the head facing the south. With silver paper he decorated the deity's crown, ears and arms. As eyes, eggs were used, still without pupils. He set small bones as teeth, two larger bones as her lion's teeth. The figure had four arms; on the one on the right, which was raised, the *pampaikkārar* placed

[1] This song was sung by a drummer of the *uṭukkai* in the Mācāṇiyammaṉ temple in Dec. 1981 as part of a two-hour impromptu 'concert'.

[2] Possibly to keep away evil spirits, but explained by informants as a necessary article for a woman.

a human thigh bone, on the left a human skull. The eyebrows of the figure were of black strips of cloth. At the goddess' feet the small figure of the Rāksasa was modelled. Nine conical shapes, the guards (*kāval*), were placed around the figure on top of the narrow platform border (the figure was made in the roofed 'shed' where the bodies are burned). Six *kāval* guarded her sides, and two were at her feet; one was behind her head.[1] A string was tied all round the figure, connecting the *kāval*. (The string represents the fort - *kōttai* -; its function is to contain the power of the goddess and at the same time to protect her). Yellow colored water was sprinkled over the figure.

At about two o'clock in the morning, a group of people left the temple for the cremation ground. One person carried a trident which was decorated with limes and flowers. The priests carried the pot (*kumpam*) and baskets containing the necessary things for the *pūcai*. Other people lit the way with torches and oil lamps. At the cremation ground, the *pampaikkārar* removed the string at the feet of the figure to make an entrance. About one hundred people, men and women, had gathered and stood separated, women to one side, men to the other, around the goddess.

The trident was placed at the head of the goddess. Only three people were allowed to go inside the area where the figure was: the *pampaikkārar*, the old man (the Kavuntar whose father had apparently first discovered Mācāniyamman) and a young man (a Mutaliyār) who would get possessed by the goddess later on. The *pampaikkārar* proceeded to place a piece of red cloth on the chest of the figure. (In this cloth the 'life' of the goddess will be carried to the river). Over the cloth he laid three saries of red or beige color. He decorated the waist of the goddess with a belt of glass beads. Then he put coal black on the eyes for pupils, thus giving the figure life. The goddess was garlanded with flowers. A big garland of limes was laid on her chest and limes were also placed:one on each side of the figure, two at her feet and one on her forehead between the eyes. Then the *pampaikkārar* collected coins from the people, which he stuck in half-circles on the crown of the figure; a few coins he deposited in the skull. Three new limes were stuck onto the prongs of the trident, which was further decorated with a red cloth and flowers. One of the priests (there are two Kurukkal and one Pantāram) had placed the *pūcai* offerings at the feet of the goddess: rice

[1] The *kāval* are called Makāmuni; they are like Asuras. (Informant (1)). One deity called Muniyappar stands opposite the sanctum in the temple. The *kāval* are compared to him.

(*paccai arici*), bananas, betel leaves, a cocoanut and jaggery on a banana leaf. Two bananas and a few pieces of jaggery were put in front of each *kāval*. Meanwhile the young man (Mutaliyār) had taken a bath in the river and applied sacred ashes to his body. He then cut the gourd (*pūcaṇikkāy*) and applied *kuṅkumam* powder on both halves.[1] The young man then did a *pūcai* to the goddess and to the *kāval*, going around the figure clockwise; this was followed by a *tīpārāṭaṉai*. The *pampaikkārar* played the drum and sang the *varalāṟu* of the goddess. Following this, the *pampaikkārar* removed the saries (save the red cloth), the money and the food offerings (these are for him). He then again played the *pampai*. The young man who was standing beside the figure suddenly got possessed (he received the goddess' grace - *arul*). His body began to shake and shortly afterwards he fell flat onto the figure, smashed its head, tore it apart and then took a handful of clay from the goddess' chest and wrapped it into the red cloth. (Nobody should see the piece taken from her chest, it is the goddess' life - *uyir*). He placed the cloth with the 'life' on a brass-plate which he then held in one hand. Into his other hand was placed the trident which was at the goddess' head. While this was going on, the *pampai* and the *paṟai* drums were played. Two people with the Vaiṣṇava *nāmam* on their foreheads blew a conch and played a gong.

The young man danced over the figure; he rolled his eyes, stuck out his tongue, ran up and down the figure. When half a lime was put in his mouth, he calmed down momentarily, then again danced wildly. At the same time, a man from the crowd of devotees also received the goddess' *arul* and danced in front of the goddess (though outside the enclosure). As the Mutaliyār danced, he jumped outside the enclosure, then he ran back onto the smashed figure and again outside into the crowd, each time going a bit further until he only danced in the path. About 50 meters down the path he stopped dancing and began to walk at a fast pace away from the cremation ground towards the place where the two rivers of Āṉaimalai meet. All the people followed him. Everything was quickly packed up and all that was left in the cremation ground were the skull, the thigh bone, and the remains of the figure.

[1] The *pūcaṇikkāy* is a substitute for a sacrificial animal. The informant (1) explicitly associated the *kuṅkumam* powder with blood. He also related that when the young man with the 'life' of the goddess leaves the cremation ground, limes are cut into four pieces, *kuṅkumam* applied on them; these pieces of lime are thrown into the four directions to prevent that anything bad should happen to that person. (I did however not see this done). The lime pieces are offerings to the malevolent spirits. Even nowadays it is a common practice to perform a *pūcai*, break a coconut, and place limes under the wheels of a bus before the bus leaves on a longer trip.

b. *Caktikumpastāpaṉam* (the 'establishment' of the *śakti kumbha*), *kaṅkaṇam kattutal* (tying of the protective bracelet).

The *kumpam* was set up at the confluence of the two rivers (Uppu, Āṟṟi). After the priests had bathed, they erected a platform of mud, about four cm high and 30 cm square. Into the metal *kumpam* (which had been covered with string and around the neck of which a red *kaṅkaṇam* had been placed) they first put some river water, then the 'life' of the goddess. A few coins were added to it as well. Then the pot was decorated in the usual way with mango leaves, a coconut, flowers and a lime on top. The pot was then placed onto the platform. The trident, which had been cleansed, was redecorated with a red cloth, flowers and limes. It was stuck into the sand behind the *kumpam* (north of it). The devotees had taken a bath in the river and were then lining up in rows in front of the *kumpam*. The *pampaikkārar* played, and the Kurukkal did a *pūcai* in front of the *kumpam*. Then the *kaṅkaṇam* (or *kāppu*) was tied on the right wrist of each devotee. A *pūcai* and a *tīpārātaṉai* followed, and then the Kurukkal sprinkled the sacred ash and some river water onto the devotees. The drums, conch and gong played again, and now all the attention was focussed on the old man (Kavuntar). As the rhythm accelerated and people shouted, he got possessed. He shook, fell down and rolled in the mud and right into the river. The young man (Mutaliyār) also got possessed, so did a few devotees. The two priests helped the old man to stand up, and holding him or propping him up (he was still possessed), they walked with him down the line of devotees. In front of each the old man stood for a while and then gave some *vipūti* to the devotee. Sometimes he seemed hesitant to give the ashes to a particular devotee.[1] The devotees who received the *vipūti* were allowed to walk over the hot coals two days later (the ceremony is however repeated before this happens - see below). The *pampaikkārar* exhorted the goddess to 'say a good word' (*nallu vākku collu*), i.e., to say some oracular words through the possessed man, however, there was no reply from the goddess. The priest then placed the *kumpam* on the old man's head and the latter began to walk (backwards) towards the shore and the road leading to the temple, his eyes focussed upwards. The *kumpam* remains in the temple, in front of Mācāṉiyamman, for three days. Each day *cakti pūcai* is performed and at the end of the three days the *kumpam* is submerged in the river.

[1] When I questioned him later as to what had made him hesitate in front of a few devotees, he said he did not know, because when he has the *arul* of the goddess he acts according to her will.

The day following the *caktikumpastāpaṉam* the *tēr* goes around the streets and the fire pit (*kuntam*) is prepared. The next morning, the devotees walk over the hot coals. One day later, the flag is taken down, the *mañcal nīr āṭutal* is done and a *pūcai* for Makāmuṉi is performed. With a *makā apiṣēkam* the festival comes to an end.

Before we have a look at how the cremation ground ceremony is performed in other temples, it may be useful to recall the most important elements of the rituals so far described. As we shall see, these elements keep recurring. a. The figure in the cremation ground: In the above three temples it was a female figure, the goddess, or in the case of Teli, where the figure was replaced by a wooden statue, the wife of an evil king. In each case something was taken away from the figure: ashes, earth/clay, intestines (Teli), i.e., life, and the figure was destroyed (in Teli this was not explicit). b. The *kapparai*, i.e., the head(s) of Brahmā, brahminicide. In Vālācāpāṭ the *kapparai* was part of the *mayāṉakkollai*. In Teli it was a 'ritual' independent of the figure in the 'cremation ground'. In Āṉaimalai the *kapparai* was absent. c. The winnowing fan containing the intestines: this was absent both in Vālācāpāṭ and in Āṉaimalai. How these elements are interrelated, we shall see in the following.

3.4. South Arcot district[1]

Mēl Malaiyaṉūr

Many devotees consider the Aṅkālamman temple of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr to be the most important and the source of the cult. Thousands of people are said to attend the annual festival, which begins on the day of *civaṉrāttiri* in Māci.

The temple has a fairly large size, covering an area of 50 cents.[2] It has a *vimāṉam* over the sanctum; a wall surrounds the temple complex. It is located at the outskirts of the village, adjacent to the cremation ground. Inside the sanctum is the termite hill, the original form of the goddess. Small pieces of the termite hill are offered to devotees as *piracātam*. Behind the termite hill is a stone *mūrtti* of Aṅkālamman in a sitting pose, one foot is placed on a head, said to be the head of Brahmā.

[1] In the following, the core rituals will be described district by district.

[2] Census of India, 1961, vol. IX, Part XI-D ii. Trichi and South Arcot.

A notice hangs inside the temple prohibiting any animal or bird sacrifices. This law is strictly being enforced and this accounts for some changes which the rituals have undergone since the time E. Thurston recorded them. (In the following pages Thurston will be quoted repeatedly *in extenso*, since his information either supplements my own or can serve as a base for comparisons.) We read in Thurston:[1]

'The celebration of the smasāna or mayanakollai at Malayanūr is thus described by Mr. K. Rangachari. The village of Malayanūr is famous for its Ankalamma temple, and during the festival, which takes place immediately after the Sīvarātri [sic], some thousands of people congregate at the temple, which is near the burning-ground. In front of the stone idol is a large ant-hill, on which two copper idols are placed, and a brass vessel, called korakkūdai, is placed at the base of the hill, to receive the various votive offerings. Early in the day the pūjāri (a Sembadavan fisherman) goes to a tank, and brings a decorated pot, called pūngkaragam, to the temple. Offerings are made to a new pot; and, after a sheep has been sacrificed, the pot is filled with water, and carried on the head of a pūjāri, who shows signs of possession by the deity, through the streets of the village to the temple, dancing wildly, and never touching the pot with his hands. It is believed that the pot remains on the head, without falling, through the influence of the goddess. When the temple is reached, another pūjāri takes up a framework, to which are tied a head made of rice flour, with three faces coloured white, black, and red, representing the head of Brāhma [sic] which was cut off by Sīva, and a pot with three faces on it. The eyes of the flour figure are represented by hen's eggs. The pot is placed beneath the head. Carrying the framework, and accompanied by music, the pūjāri goes in procession to the burning-ground, and, after offerings of a sheep, arrack, betel and fruits have been made to the head of Brāhma, it is thrown away. Close to the spot where corpses are burnt, the pūjāris place on the ground five conical heaps representing Ganēsa, made of the ashes of a corpse. To these are offered the various articles brought by those who have made vows, which include cooked pulses, bangles, betel, parts of the human body modelled in rice flour,

[1] Thurston (1906), p. 220 ff. The same is repeated in C&T (1909) under 'Sembadavan'.

etc. The offerings are piled up in a heap, which is said to reach ten or twelve feet in height. Soon afterwards, the people assembled fall on the heap, and carry off whatever they can secure. Hundreds of persons are said to become possessed, eat the ashes of the corpses, and bite any human bones, which they may come across. The ashes and earth are much prized, as they are supposed to drive away evil spirits, and secure offspring to barren women. Some persons make a vow that they will disguise themselves as Sīva, for which purpose they smear their faces with ashes, put on a cap decorated with feathers of the crow, egret, and peacock, and carry in one hand a brass vessel called Brāhma kapalam. Round their waist they tie a number of strings, to which are attached rags and feathers. Instead of the cap, Paraiyans and Valluvans wear a crown. The brass vessel, cap, and strings are said to be kept by the pūjāris, and hired out for a rupee or two per head. The festival is reputed to be based on the following legend. Sīva and Brāhma had the same number of faces. During the swayamvaram, Parvati, the wife of Sīva, found it difficult to recognise her husband, so Sīva cut off Brāhma's head. The head stuck on to Sīva's hand, and he could not get rid of it. To get rid of the skull, and throw off the crime of the murder, Sīva wandered far and wide, and came to the burning-ground at Malayanūr, where various Bhūthas were busy eating the remains of corpses. Parvati also arrived there, and failed to recognise Sīva. Thereon the skull laughed, and fell to the ground. The Bhūthas were so delighted that they put various kinds of herbs into a big vessel, and made out of them a sweet liquor, by drinking which Sīva was absolved from his crime. For this reason, arrack is offered to him at the festival.'

The *mayānakkollai* as it is still performed today in Mēl Malaiyanūr follows pretty much the above description, with the exception of the animal sacrifices and the offerings of liquor. The important part of the ritual, as stressed by informants,[1] is the *kapparai*, i.e., the three faces which are carried to the cremation ground. It is interesting that one informant, a young *pūcāri*,[2] insisted that the three faces represent those of Brahmā, Visnu and Rudra, whereas his father, also a *pūcāri*, said that they are the heads of Brahmā (see below, 5.1.). The *kapparai* has the

[1] Informant (1) and his father.

[2] Informant (1).

power to expel various malevolent spirits (*pēy, picācu*), spells (*mantiram*), harmful effects of witchcraft (*ēval*) and it protects against any danger from the four directions (*ticaikattu*). As soon as the *pūcāri* carrying the *kapparai* approaches those who are possessed by a harmful force, that force will leave them (Inf. (1)).

For the *mayānakkollai* (which takes place on *amāvācai*) people bring *kolukkattai* to the cremation ground. These are thrown up into the air and then a struggle ensues, as each devotee tries to get a few pieces. The ritual eating of the ashes of corpses and the chewing of human bones by the possessed does not seem to occur anymore; at least the *pūcāri* deny or do not talk about this practice. A reference, that the *mayānakkollai* enacted by the devotees refers to the goddess' madness or frenzy, we find in a song to Aṅkāḷamman:

aṅkamuttu..(i.e. Aṅkāḷammaṉ)
arttakaṅkul nērattilē kollaiyatu koṇṭāḷ ...
māci nici amāvācai māṉitarkaḷ toḻuka
māyāṇṭikūṭa maruḷāṭi niṉṟāḷ puviyil[1]

Aṅkamuttu
she plundered at midnight.
In Māci, on the new moon night, while the people were worshipping
she danced, possessed, with Māyāṇṭi, in the world[2]

In the past years the pillaging of the cremation ground as described by Thurston has taken on a 'milder' form, however, we shall see that not all traces of the original practice (of taking the ashes and bones of a recently burned body) have disappeared. Whereas in most other temples the dead body/ies has been replaced by the figure made of the ashes of a burned body, this is not so in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr. There, no 'human' figure is made. One probable reason for this is that the emphasis of the ritual is on the *kapparai* and not, as in other places, on the figure; i.e., it is the goddess' destruction of the head of Brahmā which is celebrated and not her victory over Vallāḷarāja ṉ. For the same reason, the ritual of carrying around the intestines in a winnowing fan (the *pillaippāvu*)[3] is not performed there.

[1] Aṅkāḷamman *kuṟavañci* (Cf. chapter V).
[2] Māyāṇṭi - Śiva; *maruḷāṭi - maruḷ + āṭa* 'to dance'.
[3] *pillai* - 'child', 'infant'. *pāvu = pāku* - a 'cake', a dough consisting of rice flour (*paccai arici māvu*) shaped generally into any form and eaten later. Here the cake has the shape of a child. The cake (and the whole ritual) is made as an offering to get a child (*pillai*) in return. Some informants also used the term *pillaippāvai*, i.e., 'a doll for a child'.

Devotees who have made a vow to that effect, still dress themselves in rags and feathers. I saw one man and his young boy who came to Mēl Malaiyaṉūr dressed in such a way: The man was wearing a yellow dhoti and over it a skirt consisting of strings on which colored papers and feathers had been tied. Around his head he wore a headband on which various feathers were stuck and on his head he carried a *kalacam*; the boy was similarly dressed. According to the *pūcāri*, this dress-up is the goddess' *vēsam* rather than that of Śiva. In the above quoted song to Aṅkāḷamman we find a reference which supports the *pūcāri*'s opinion:

palapakṣi iṟakukaḷai cittāṅka kañculiyāy
Ammaṉ ...
pakṣamutaṉ tāṉ tarittu malaiyaṉūril vāḻa[1]

Feathers of many birds were the jacket of her body of intelligence[2]
she wore it with pleasure to live in Malaiyaṉūr

(In Tintivaṉam, the young girls and boys who went around the streets to collect money for the festival, were dressed like this as well.) The feathers which the goddess wears are associated with her terrifying form and with the madness (*veṟi*) which took hold of her, after the *kapālam* had gotten stuck to her hand.[3]

We have heard in the story of the goddess, that on her way to Malaiyaṉūr, she stayed shortly in Avalūr and in Tāyaṉūr. Tāyaṉūr is about two km from Malaiyaṉūr, at the other side of a big lake. The Muttāḷammaṉ temple in Tāyaṉūr is very small and partly in ruins. The *pūcāri* of the temple is a Vanniyar. Aṅkāḷammaṉ is considered to be the sister of Muttāḷammaṉ and until recently a brass *mūrtti* of Aṅkāḷammaṉ used to be in the Muttāḷammaṉ temple. Now (for reasons of safety) the brass *mūrtti* is in a separate shrine. No festival is celebrated for Aṅkāḷammaṉ, but she is worshipped with *pūcai* during the festival for Muttāḷammaṉ in the month of Vaikāci. No *mayāṉakkollai* is performed in this village. In Avalūrpēttai (10 km from Malaiyaṉūr) we find Aṅkāḷammaṉ again in the Muttāḷammaṉ temple. The *pūcāri* of this temple is a Nāyutu. Aṅkāḷammaṉ, who here is also the sister of Muttāḷammaṉ, is inside the temple, on the side in front of the sanctum.

[1] Aṅkāḷammaṉ *kuṟavañci* (18), see ch. V.

[2] *cittāṅkam - citturūpam, citturu* 'god as embodiment of intelligence' (TL)

[3] Cf. below, B 1.

The Cempaṭavar (Nāṭṭār) of this area celebrate the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* for Aṅkāḷammaṉ each year at the same time as the Cempaṭavar of Malaiyaṉūr. In an abandoned field a figure - that of Aṅkāḷammaṉ - is made from earth and ashes collected at the cremation ground. Four guards (*kāval*), one at each corner, guard the figure. On the day of the *koḷḷai*, devotees who have made vows dress up as Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Pāvāṭairāyaṉ, Kāṭṭavarāyaṉ and Vīrabhadra (Vīrapaṭṭiraṉ). *Koḷukkaṭṭai* and varieties of lentils or peas (*cuṇṭal*) are brought to the figure and thrown up into the air. These, together with the ashes of the figure, are picked up and taken home. The goddess is vegetarian, no animals are sacrificed during the festival.

Thurston,[1] in another description of the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*, tells us why people disguise themselves as Aṅkāḷammaṉ and Vīrabhadra:

> 'A ceremonial rite, called mayanakollai, or robbery in the smasānam or mayanam (burning-ground), forms part of the festival celebrated by the Sembadavan fishermen on a new-moon day in honour of the goddess Ankalamma. Its origin is based on the following legend. One Vallāla Māharāja, by severe penance and austerity, secured a boon, whereby to beget a child capable of destroying everything in the universe. Learning this, the Dēvas hurried to the three Murtis, Brahma, Vishnu, and Sīva. Sīva placed a curse on the Rāja, so that his wife should not conceive. After some years, however, the Rāni became pregnant, but still no child was born. Finally, Ankalamma, a Sembadavan woman married to the god Sīva, came to the Rāja's territory disguised as a midwife. Hearing of her arrival, Vallāla Rāja sent for her, and asked her to assist the Rāni. This the mock midwife promised to do, on condition that no male should be allowed to enter the precincts of the building, in which the Rāni was to be delivered. Securing this condition, Ankalamma went to the Rāni, and assumed her real form. The Rāni thereon fainted, and Ankalamma tore open her abdomen and destroyed the child. Simultaneously, her son Vīrabhadra entered the palace, and killed Vallāla Rāja. The whole town was then sacked, and it was converted into a burning-ground. In commemoration of this event, the festival is celebrated. On the last day, or in the afternoon if it lasts only for a single day, the god and goddess are carried in procession to the burning-ground. Two people dress up to represent

[1] Thurston (1906), p. 220 ff. (Cf. picture on p. 220).

Vīrabhadra and Ankalamma, and a boy, disguised as Katteri (a devil) accompanies them. Vīrabhadra carries in one hand a long sword with a lime-fruit stuck on the point, and in the other the head of Vallāla Rāja. Ankalamma, in like manner, carries a scimitar with a lime on the point, and a new winnow containing the well-washed and cleaned viscera of a sheep. A portion of the intestines is kept in the mouth of the mock goddess till the return of the god and goddess, at the end of ten or twelve hours, to the village temple. When the burning-ground is reached, a plantain leaf is placed on the recent ashes of a corpse, or on the bare ground, where a body has once been cremated. On the leaf are set a small quantity of mutton, cooked rice, dried fish, cakes, pulses, a piece of a human bone, and a bottle of arrack (liquor). The men disguised as Vīrabhadra and Ankalamma, accompanied by the Katteri, go thrice round the plantain leaf, which is then lifted, and thrown high into the air. The crowd then scramble for a share of the food-stuffs, and for some minutes there is a regular melée.'

To dress as the goddess or Vīrabhadra is very popular during the Aṅkāḷamman festival of Tiṇṭivanam (Avarappākkam). The Aṅkāḷamman temple was built by the Cempaṭavar (Nāṭṭār) community. Its age was estimated at 150 years by the present *pūcāri*, but he thinks that the worship of the goddess in this place started at least 250 years ago. The *pūcāri* are Cempaṭavar (Nāṭṭār); there are four divisions (*parivu*), and one person of each division will be *pūcāri* for a particular time (usually one year). The festival is organized by the Nāṭṭār. As in Malaiyanūr, it starts on *makācivanrāttiri* day with the flag hoisting ceremony. In the evening, the goddess, together with Śiva (in the form of a *liṅkam*), goes around the streets on a cart which is decorated with both silver and color paper and with flowers; two small statues of horses are in front of the deities, on the cart. Around midnight, the figure in the cremation ground is made. The next day is the day of the *mayāṇakkoḷḷai*. In 1981 about 60 people fulfilled their vows by putting on the costume of Aṅkāḷamman or Vīrabhadra. An Aṅkāḷamman disguise (*vēṣam*) consisted of the following: A cone-shaped papier-mâché crown surrounded by the flame-like hair. The face of the devotee was painted red and had white decorations; his eyes were often covered with egg-shells. He wore a black sari, and on his back and

shoulders a board was tied, from which seven arms protruded on each side. The seven arms on each side were connected with red plastic tubes, or threads (substitutes of the intestines), and some of these issued from the mouth of the person. In one hand the man carried a winnowing fan containing some red rice flour, and in the other hand he held a trident. Around his neck, the man was garlanded with flowers. Some men wore crowns decorated with feathers, while others had big tongues (of paper) sticking out of their mouths. Some wore red or yellow saris. Devotees dressed as Vīrabhadra wore big crowns and carried in their hand a bow and arrow. Only men dress up. From ten AM until sun-set these 'Aṅkālammaṉs' and 'Vīrabhadras' danced through the streets of the town. Towards evening they reached the tank near the cremation ground and there they took off their costumes. In the cremation ground lay a figure of ashes and earth about 1,5 m long, with two arms. All over its body turmeric powder and *kuṅkumam* had been sprinkled and here and there five-paise pieces had been placed. No *kāval* or string surrounded it and no bones were anywhere on the figure. (Apparently the remains of a freshly burned body had not, just then, been available). The figure is called Mayāṉavīraṉ. That day, the goddess toured the streets on a *ciṅka vākaṉam*. She was decorated as Mahiṣāsuramardiṉī, (*makiṭācūra camhārattutaṉ ātiparācakti*)[1]: she had 12 arms, each hand holding a weapon, one of them a trident pointing at the neck of a male figure lying at her feed (Asura). The goddess stopped near the tank (she does not go to the cremation ground) where devotees brought offerings to her. Around the figure (Mayāṉavīraṉ) a large crowd had gathered, the devotees had brought *koḷukkaṭṭai, cuṇṭal* and *porikaṭalai*.[2] The *koḷḷai* is initiated by a man who carries on his head a huge decoration made of sticks which jut out like the spines of a porcupine, and on which flags of various colors are tied. When this 'Asura' rolls on the figure, the things are thrown up into the air. This takes place after the goddess has arrived at the tank. The *pūcāri* does not participate in the *koḷḷai*.

When we look at the performances of the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* so far described, we get the impression that we are dealing with two types of rituals, one, in which the emphasis is on the *kapparai* and in which the *piḷḷaippāvu* is absent or a peripheral part of the ritual, and another, in which the

[1] As printed in the festival notice.

[2] Parched Bengal gram seasoned with turmeric and salt (TL).

pillaippāvu is an important part of the ritual and the *kapparai* a separate ritual (Teḷi, also Tiṇṭivaṉam where the *kapparai* - the head of Brahmā - is taken to the cremation ground a day before the *kollai*, i.e., when the figure is made.) We shall see that the *pillaippāvu* has in one case (Tri-P.) become a ritual totally separated from the *mayāṉakkollai*, so much so, that it is performed in a different month than the ritual in the cremation ground.

At our next stop, however, in Viluppuram, we see that the *mayāṉakkoḷ-ḷai* and the *pillaippāvu* are totally integrated. The *pūcāri* of this temple is a Cempaṭavar (Nāṭṭār). In 1982 the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* was celebrated for the 42nd time.

At one AM in the night of *makācivaṉrāttiri*, the *pūcāri* models a small figure (about one meter long) of ashes in the cremation ground. (He makes only a small, provisionary figure, because it is too dark to fashion a big figure.) At the head of this figure, he places an earthen pot (*kalacam*) in which there is a coin (*veḷḷikkācu*) and a lamp of rice flour paste (*māviḷakku*). The pot is topped with a coconut. The next day, in the morning, a big figure is shaped (of ashes of a burned body). The *pūcāri* places a sari on top of the figure and then buries some intestines in the figure's belly. The *kalacam* is again placed at the figure's head. At two in the afternoon, the procession to the cremation ground (the *pūcāri* called it *ruttirapūmi*[1]) starts from the temple. People who have made vows dress up as Kāṭṭēri, Pāvāṭairāyaṉ, *kuṟatti* (gypsy)[2] and one person dresses as Kāḷi. Kāḷi comes to the temple before the procession starts off. A chicken is cut and some of its blood is mixed with the rice which is in the winnowing fan carried by Kāḷi. En route to the cremation ground, Kāḷi throws this blood rice into the air. A *kapparai* (*mukakkapparai*) is also brought to the cremation ground. This *kapparai* is one head only, about 30 cm long, of wood, painted red, with fangs. Over the head's crown a cobra spreads its five-headed hood. It is the head of Aṅkāḷammaṉ. A pot is tied beneath the head; inside the pot a *māviḷakku* is burning. Both Kāḷi and the *kapparai* can leave the temple only after the chicken has been sacrificed. Anyone is allowed to carry the *kapparai*, but usually the person who carried the *karakam* on the first day of the festival will carry the *kapparai*. The goddess is taken close to the figure in the cremation ground. The *pampaikkārar* recites the goddess' *varalāṟu*, then a *tīpārāṭaṉai* is done and the goddess is brought back to the road where she waits while

[1] Lit. Rudra's earth or ground, i.e., where Rudra dances (TL).

[2] A woman of the *kuṟavar* tribe.

the *kollai* is performed. The person who holds the *kapparai* will have his face covered with a yellow cloth. At the cremation ground, he will go around the figure and place the *kapparai* at the figure's head. (The *kapparai* signifies the goddess' presence, its function is that of a *kāval*). Then Kāḷi gets possessed ('he will not know what he is doing'). Usually, there will be a body burning in the cremation ground that day. Kāḷi first goes to this body, takes a handful of the ashes from it and eats them (this will appease her anger). Kāḷi is then led to the figure, Vallāḷarājaṉ's wife. Kāḷi falls onto the figure, rips open its belly, pulls out the intestines and puts some of them around her neck and some into the winnowing fan. Kāḷi also picks up some of the ashes, which she will give to devotees later.

When Kāḷi falls onto the figure, the *kapparai* is removed and deposited on the *vākaṉam* of the goddess. During the *kollai*, people from the temple pick up ashes from the figure, put them into a basket and distribute these as *piracātam* when the procession goes back to the temple. The ashes have the power to make women fertile, to cure illnesses and to keep away evil spirits (*pēy, picācu*). The pot which had been placed at the head of the figure gets broken in the scramble of the *kollai*. After the procession has reached the temple, the *pūcāri* and others involved in the *kollai* bathe; the goddess is newly decorated and is brought again around the streets. The next morning the goddess is bathed in turmeric (*mañcaḷ nīr*), this is to purify her from her excursion to the cremation ground.

The *pūcāri*'s remarks about the goddess' presence in the cremation ground are of some interest here. The goddess is present during the *mayāṉakkollai* in the form of the *kapparai*, in her form as Kāḷi. It is not Aṅkāḷammaṉ who falls on the figure and pulls out the intestines, (she is not supposed to do this), but it is Kāḷi.[1] The dual aspect of the goddess is revealed very clearly here. On the one hand, it is Aṅkāḷammaṉ who goes to the cremation ground to rip open the stomach of Vallāḷarājaṉ's wife; on the other hand, because Aṅkāḷammaṉ is *cutta*, she should not be involved in this bloody ritual. She is therefore split into two, her pure part, i.e., Aṅkāḷammaṉ, waits at a distance from the cremation ground, while her dark and ferocious part, Kāḷi (the *kapparai* and the man dressed as Kāḷi), does the unpleasant work for her. The fact that Aṅkāḷammaṉ has to be purified with a turmeric bath (because she has gone to the cremation

[1] All interpretations in the descriptive part of this chapter are those of informants, i.e., in the above instances, those of the *pucari*.

ground - *pūcāri*'s explanation) also shows that it is her (although her dark aspect) and not a substitute for her, who tears apart the figure.

In Teli we have seen that the *kapparai* is not directly associated with the figure from whose stomach the intestines are removed. Very similar to the pattern of the rituals in Teli is the performance of the festival in Perumpākkam. (The *pūcāri* is a Kavuntar). The village lies about five km west of Viluppuram. As in Teli, the ritual with the *kapparai* is divided into three stages. On the first day (the second day of the festival - the festival takes place at the beginning of Cittirai, April-May) a person dresses up as Īśvara. In his hand he holds a *kapālam* (this is a brass or copper vessel decorated with faces of ascetics (?) with flowing hair; *vipūti* is usually kept in this vessel). Īśvara goes in procession with the goddess around the streets, then, while the goddess waits some distance away, the *pūcāri*, the *pampaikkārar* and Īśvara go to the cremation ground where a *tīparātaṉai* is done. On the second day, a *kapparai* with three faces, representing the Trimūrti, is taken similarly to the cremation ground and destroyed there. The following day, a *pūvalai kapparai*[1] is carried around the streets, brought to the cremation ground and destroyed there. On the fourth day, the *kuṭal piṭuṅki tiruviḻā* takes place. People dress up as Aṅkāḷamman, Kāṭṭēri, Vīrabhadra, *kuṟatti*. They go to the cremation ground where the figure of Vallāḷakanti (Vallāḷakantaṉ's wife) has been fashioned. In a state of possession (*āvēcam*) they pull out the intestines (of a goat), which had been placed on the stomach of the figure, and garland themselves with them. On the next day, fire pots (*akkiṉi karakam*) are taken around the streets (this is supposed to show the goddess' anger and also the anger of Vallāḷakantaṉ). A *pūjā* and a *tīparātaṉai* are performed in the cremation ground. On the sixth day, the destruction of Vallāḷakantaṉ is enacted. Seven people, representing seven *kantaṉ* (heroes or rulers), i.e., Vallāḷakantaṉ and his brothers (they are *cūrar*),[2] wait in various corners of the village. A man dressed as Kāḷi goes around the streets and 'kills' one *kantaṉ* after the other, the one closest to the cremation ground being the last one 'killed'.

The next morning the goddess is brought to the tank. The bath purifies her from her sin of killing. Later that day, a person gets possessed,

[1] In Teli the flower *kapparai* was carried around the streets prior to the *kapparai* with the faces. In Cūḷai (Madras) the flower *kapparai* is the first of the three *kapparai* (see below).

[2] *cūraṉ* - 'warrior', 'hero', often connoting 'Asura'.

and he is handed a *māvu caṭṭi* (a vessel containing flour, also called *poli caṭṭi* 'vessel of abundance'[1]). Possessed, he goes to the cremation ground, making his way through thorns and bushes (he goes wherever the spirit leads him, nobody can stop him or bar his way). In the cremation ground, he falls onto the figure and grabs the ashes of the figure, then the possession leaves him. The assembled crowd scrambles for the ashes.

The rituals here are divided to follow the sequence of the two myths associated with the rituals: the destruction of the *kapālam* and the destruction of Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's wife and of the king himself. At the end, the figure, which served as the sacrificial victim, is taken (respectively given) as *piracātam*.

The ceremonies which Thurston describes as being performed by the Cempaṭavar are not (or no longer) exclusively performed by that caste. The ritual enactment of Vallāḷarājaṉ's destruction, as described by Thurston (see above), bears a striking resemblance to the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* as it is still performed by the Vaṉṉiyar *pūcāri* of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple in Citamparam: The festival is for one day, during Māci, on *makācivaṉrāttiri*. One man dresses up as Aṅkāḷammaṉ; he has intestines in his mouth, carries a winnowing fan, in which there is a small doll made from the paste of rice flour. One man dresses as Vīrabhadra; he carries a (doll's) head in his hand. These two go to the cremation ground, where there is a small figure representing Vallāḷarājaṉ.[2] Sweets, meat and fish are spread in front of the figure. These are thrown up into the air, and the devotees catch them and take them home. Ashes (in the cremation ground) are put into the *kapālam* (the brass vessel with the faces on it) and distributed.

3.5. North Arcot district

The Cempaṭavar (Nāṭṭār) of Vālājāpeṭṭai claim that their temple is second to the one in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr. The original temple or shrine no longer exists, only a *bilva* tree surrounded by stones laid into a square marks the spot. The present temple used to be a room in the house of the

[1] Cf. Whitehead (1976), p. 94, who says, that the *poli* (Telugu: 'food') is regarded as food for the malevolent spirits.

[2] This is not the only instance where the figure is called Vallāḷarājaṉ (cf. Kuṉṉattūr). We shall discuss the various names given to the figure below.

pūcāri. A termite hill had sprung up and the room had been converted into a temple. For a description of the *mayānakkollai* we can again go back to Thurston[1] and then compare it with the present-day performance. In Thurston we read:

'My Assistant, Mr. Govindan, was present at the festival called Smasānakollai, held at Walajapet in honour of Ankamma, the goddess of Malayanūr, on the day following Sivarātri. A huge figure, representing the goddess, was made at the burning-ground out of the ashes of burnt bodies mixed with water, the eyes being made of two hens' eggs painted black in the centre to represent the pupils. It was covered with a yellow cloth, and a sweet-smelling powder (kadambam) was sprinkled over it. The following articles, which are required by a married woman, were placed on it - a comb, a pot containing colour-powder, glass bangles, rolls of palm-leaf for dilating the ear-lobes, and a string of black beads. Devotees presented as offerings limes, plantains, toddy, arrack, sugar-cane, and various kinds of cooked grains and other eatables. About midday the goddess was taken in procession from her shrine to the burning-ground, and placed in front of the figure. The pūjāri (a fisherman), who wore a special dress for the occasion, walked in front of the idol, carrying in one hand a brass cup representing the skull which Siva carried in his hand, and in the other a piece of human skull-bone, which he bit and chewed as the procession moved onwards. When the burning-ground was reached, he performed pūja by breaking a cocoanut, and going round the figure with burning camphor in his hand. Goats and fowls were sacrificed. A woman, possessed by a devil, seated herself at the feet of the figure, and became wild and agitated. The pūja completed, the assembled multitude fell on the figure, and carried off whatever they could grab of the articles placed on it, which are believed to possess healing and other virtues. They also smeared their bodies with the ashes. The pūjāri, and some of the devotees, then became possessed, and ran about the burning-ground, seizing and eating partly burnt bones. Tradition runs to the effect that, in olden times, they used to eat even the dead bodies, if they came across any, and the people are so afraid of their doing this that, if a death should

[1] Thurston (1906), p. 222 ff.

occur, the corpse is not taken to the burning-ground till the festival is over.'

The figure, i.e., Aṅkālamman, is made and decorated on *makācivanrāttiri*, the night preceding the day of the *kollai*. (The *pūcāri* stated that no women are present in the cremation ground when the figure is made). The figure is covered with a yellow cloth. Over it are spread various kinds of pulse (*payaru*), *cuntal*, betel leaves, camphor, a comb, a mirror, a small cloth bag (*pai*), turmeric, *kuṅkumam* and eye-black (i.e., things which women need). Here and there limes and pieces of brown sugar are placed on the figure. Around the figure a fort (*kōṭṭai*) is 'constructed' by placing small cone-shaped heaps of clay, called Piḷḷaiyār[1] (a small number of them representing a total of 108), on both sides of the figure and connecting them with a string, leaving openings (*vācal* - 'gateway', 'entrance') at the head and at the feet of the figure. A yellow flag is at the head of the figure. Before the pupils are drawn with eye-black (the figure given life), a chicken is sacrificed.

On the day of the *kollai* the goddess is taken around the streets on the lion vehicle. With her go those who have dressed themselves as Kāli, Kāṭṭēri, etc.; they are garlanded with intestines or bite a liver. A boy will be dressed in a colored skirt (*pāvāṭai*) and decorated with feathers. He carries the *kapālam* (i.e., the brass pot with the faces), a cane and some margosa leaves. He represents Aṅkālamman (!). A *kapparai* of five heads - those of Brahmā - is carried by one of the Nāttār. (This person has to be very pure and careful, otherwise the *kapparai* may cause him harm, and he may bleed through the nose). A small pot containing a *māviḷakku* is tied beneath the heads. This pot is broken when the *kapparai* is planted at the figure's head; often it breaks while the *kapparai* goes around the streets (i.e., when the person carrying it falls down while he is possessed). During the procession some people may perform mock fights with sticks (*cilampam*). The goddess is brought to the cremation ground and seated at the head of the figure. A *tīpārāṭaṇai* is followed by a sacrifice (*pali*) of a chicken, a goat and a pumpkin (*pūcaṇikkāy*) at the figure's feet. Devotees, especially women, will throw the things they have brought into the air (these are: *koḷḷu* - 'Horse gram', *moccaikkoṭṭai* - '*black seeded dolichos, lablab vulgaris*', *vaḷḷikkiḻaṅku* - 'sweet potato'). Picking these up together with the things on the figure, they often carry away pieces

[1] The informant (*pūcāri*) also called them *āvuṭaiyār* - i.e., *liṅga* (the term is used for both the *liṅga* and the *yoni*).

of the earth of which the figure is made. Women, whose wish for a child has been fulfilled, sometimes fashion a small doll with rice flour paste and throw this up into the air during the *kollai*, shouting '*kollai, kollai*', or they may even throw their child into the air a few times.

The figure in the cremation ground is Aṅkāḷamman and why this should be so, is explained in an altered version of myth 12:

'After Śiva had cut off one of Brahmā's heads, he was followed by the sin of brahminicide (*piramakatti, piramātti*). Like a lunatic he roamed about and slept in cremation grounds. Śakti, who saw this, consulted her brother (Mahāviṣnu). He told her that there was only one remedy: On *civaṉrāttiri*, which has three *pūcai* (*muppūcai*), the goddess should bring some *moccaikkoṭṭai, koḷḷu* etc. to the cremation ground. Viṣnu would also come there. The goddess should lie on the ground, facing the sky and Viṣnu would place all these things (*moccaikkoṭṭai* etc.) around her. So they did. Śiva arrived at the cremation ground. Mahāviṣnu performed the three *pūcai*; the *piramakatti*, seeing the *moccaikkoṭṭai* etc. sprang down from Śiva's hand in order to eat these. Viṣnu then said to Śiva: '*Maccāṉ, mēlē pō*!' ('Brother-in-law, go up' i.e., to 'heaven'). The Ammaṉ then looked at Viṣnu and asked: 'What is going to happen to me?' The *piramakatti* looked around (to see where Śiva was). Viṣnu then ordered the goddess to show her hand. When she stretched out her hand, the *piramakatti* fastened itself on her hand and she started to dance like one possessed by a spirit's madness (*pēy veṟi piṭittu āṭukiṟāḷ*).'

'It is for this *piramakatti* that we Nāṭṭār perform this *pūcai*.' The liver and intestines in the mouth of the men dressed as Kāḷi etc. were explained to be those of Makarācuraṉ (Mahiṣāsura?), the *cūraṉ* which she tramples under her foot.

We can see already the complexity of the core rituals. Not only is one myth or the other (myth 3 or 12) offered as an explanation, but a myth may also be re-interpreted to fit the form of the ritual. Other mythical images (Durgā's killing of Mahiṣa) enter the picture as well (cf. also Tiṇṭivaṉam where the goddess goes to the cremation ground as Mahiṣāsuramardiṉī). The case of Vāḷājāpeṭṭai also shows us that, although both myths may be currently known (the informant also related myth 3), one of them will be given preference, while the other hangs suspended. The only comment the informant had to offer for the Vallāḷarājaṉ myth was: 'It is here that the goddess killed Vallāḷarājaṉ'.

All the above descriptions should suffice to reveal the basic pattern of the core rituals. In the following, only major differences or points which will help to elucidate certain aspects of the rituals shall be pointed out. We shall come back to the basic pattern at the end of the descriptions and summarize the important variations of the rituals.

Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Parvatarājakula vīti), Rātāpuram, Cāttaṉūr.

In all three temples Cempaṭavar are *pūcāri* (in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and Cāttaṉūr: Nāṭṭār, in Rātāpuram: Pūcari). In all three temples a figure is made in the cremation ground, in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and Rātāpuram that of Aṅkāḷamman, while in Cāttaṉūr it is called Rākkāyācci. In Cāttaṉūr some people get possessed during the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and chew the bones of a dead body. In the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple no *kapparai* is brought to the cremation ground, the reason being that there is nobody strong enough to carry it.

3.6. Chengleput district

Erumaiveṭṭippāḷaiyam: The *pūcāri* is a Paṇṭāram. The *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* takes place in Māci. The figure in the cremation ground, made of ashes, bones and earth, is that of Aṅkāḷamman. A vessel (*pāṉai*) which contains water and margosa leaves is placed at the head of the figure. This gets broken during the *koḷḷai*. Men of the *pūcāri*'s family dress up as Aṅkāḷamman and get possessed. They fall over the figure and take from it what they can. Women who want to have children will pick up the limes on the figure during the *koḷḷai*. In the cremation ground a goat is sacrificed. No *kapparai* is used in the ritual.

Tamaraiṭṭippāḷaiyam: The *pūcāri* is a Paṇṭāram. Aṅkāḷamman is the *kula teyvam* of many Reṭṭiyār families. The festival takes place in Vaikāci (May-June). The figure in the cremation ground, made of ashes, bones and earth, is that of Śakti or Amman. One man of the Reṭṭiyār families gets possessed during the *koḷḷai*, he falls on the figure and there is so much power in him that he crushes the bones and eats them. The *pampaikkārar* gets dressed up as Aṅkāḷamman. In front of the temple an image of the goddess is drawn with chalk. The *pampaikkārar* brings a big *kalacam* (donated by the informant's family) and places it at this figure's feet. A plate of liver and intestines is placed on top of the *kalacam*, arrack is brought and put in front of the image. The *pampaikkārar* (as Aṅkāḷamman) then eats the liver and the intestines and drinks the arrack. Devotees, who have made vows, dress up as *kuṟavaṉ* and *kuṟatti* in rags and feathers.

3.7. Coimbatore district

Most of the Aṅkāḷamman̲ temples in the Coimbatore district will have, in addition to the ritual in the cremation ground, a *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* (walking over hot coals ceremony) as part of their annual festival. Where this *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* takes place, the core rituals have often been separated, so that the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* precedes the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* and the *piḷḷaippāvu* follows the *kuṇṭam* ritual, i.e., the sequence of the rituals would be as follows: the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* would take place a day after the flag hoisting, it would be followed by one or two days of *kuṇṭam* rituals and the *piḷḷaippāvu* would be performed on the last or second to last day of the festival (Orrai., Avan., Per., and Beck[1]). For the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* a figure is modelled in the cremation ground, often of earth only (Beck, Orrai., Per.). The name given to this figure varies (Beck: Vallāḷarāja̲n's wife, i.e., a pregant woman; Orrai.: Pēcci; Avan.: Ammaṉāttā; Per.: Macāṉa-ka̲ruppa̲n). A *kapparai* of one or of three faces is brought to the figure and destroyed in the cremation ground at the end of the *pūcai* or sacrifice. On the way to the cremation ground a young black goat may be sacrificed (Beck; Orrai., where those carrying the *kapparai* will drink some of the goat's blood). In front of the figure in the cremation ground a small black pig or a chicken, a goat and a pig (called *mukkāvu* - 'triple sacrifice') are sacrificed. The heads of these animals have to open their mouths a few times, that is, they have to eat the rice or *uruṇṭai* (small ball of rice) which is placed before them. The figure in the cremation ground is not destroyed, and none of the things such as *koḷukkaṭṭai*, *koḷḷu* etc. are thrown up into the air. When the animals are sacrificed or when the *kapparai* is deposited near the figure, the devotees will shout (Beck relates, that in Kāṅkaya nāṭu they shout '*mayāṉakkoḷḷai*' a few times), but there is no actual *koḷḷai*. The brass vessel called *kapālam* may be brought from the temple, filled with ashes, and placed on the left hand of the cremation ground figure and later returned to the temple; the ashes will be distributed as *piracātam* (Per.). Since no actual *koḷḷai* takes place on the figure (the figure can also be made in an uncultivated plot of land), the ritual is also called 'causing the face to go to the cremation ground' or rather 'to the goddess of the cremation ground'.[2]

[1] Beck (1968), p. 171 ff. Subsequent references to Beck in connection with the core rituals will be from this same source and refer to Kāṅkaya nāṭu.

[2] Irukūr: *mayāṉa īcuvari ammaṉ kōyilil mukam celuttutal.*

In some places of the Coimbatore district, the figure fashioned annually from clay (and ashes) in the cremation ground has become permanent: a goddess called Macāṉiyāttā or Macāṉiyammaṉ. We have seen how this may come about at the example of Kuppucciputūr. In Kuppucciputūr, a temporary figure is made for the festival despite the fact that Macāṉiyammaṉ has become established permanently (see below); this is not the case in Cūlūr, Irukūr and Pallatam, where, during the ritual, Macāṉiyammaṉ takes the place of the temporary figure. The pattern of the ritual remains, however, the same as in those cases where a temporary figure is made.

The faces of the *kapparai* are often modelled with rice flour *(paccai arici māvu)* onto a winnowing fan. They are painted in various colors: green, red, yellow (Pal.), red, green, black (Iru) and represent a female deity or guardian. Some *pūcāri* simply did not know whose faces they were (the Pillai priest of Pallatam suggested that the three faces may be those of Mahiṣāsura). The one head is Pēcci (Beck) or the head of the figure in the cremation ground (Avan.: Ammaṉāttā), the three heads those of Īśvarī (Iru.), those of the three female guardians of Vallālarājaṉ's fort (Mutta.). None of the informants in the Coimbatore district associated the *mayāṉakkollai* with the myth of Śiva's brahminicide and the goddess' destruction of the *kapālam*; the Vallālarājaṉ myth, however, was generally known or at least the informant would have heard the name Vallālarājaṉ. In all cases, the Vallālarājaṉ myth was modified to the effect that Aṅkālammaṉ took the *avatāram* of Pēcci in order to teach the king a lesson.

The *kapparai* is not the 'evil' *piramakatti* which has to be destroyed, but that which does the destroying, i.e., the goddess, or her *avatāram* Pēcci. The *kapparai*'s power to remove malevolent spirits (and barrenness - Per.) is demonstrated in a ritual called *mukappallaiyam* (Per., Iru.). Women who are possessed by such spirits or who wish to get children assemble in the front part of the temple, and the *kapparai* (*mukam* - 'face')[1] is waved in front of them.

For the *pillaippāvu*, a goat (or pregnant goat) is sacrificed, and the intestines and liver are removed. The cleaned intestines are blown up and made into garlands which are worn by a man[2] dressed in a sari[3]

[1] *pallaiyam* - an offering, an offering to 'demons'.

[2] *pūcāri* (Beck) or a devotee (Avan.: a Kottaṉar, a mason).

[3] He may wear margosa leaves on his head (Orrai.).

(i.e., dressed as Pēcci, e.g., Beck, Orrai., Per.). In his mouth is the liver. In a new winnowing fan (*paccai muṟam*), a small figure of flour paste is made. Instead of this figure, the goat liver may be put into the winnowing fan (Beck), or the foetus of the pregnant goat (the latter procedure prevailed in Pērur, but now no animals are sacrificed in this temple and, instead of the intestines and the foetus, oleander flowers[1] are placed into the winnowing fan). The small figure represents Iruḷappaṉ, the child which Pēcci removed from Vallāḷarāṇī's womb (Orrai.). Pēcci, who carries the winnowing fan, will go around the streets, and devotees (especially women) will offer coins (milk money - Beck; *kāṉikkai* - Avan.) In Orraikkāḷmaṇṭapam, rice mixed with blood is thrown up into the air while Pēcci goes around; this, according to the informant, is to protect the village. In Kāṅkaya nāṭu the winnowing fan is brought to the edge of the village (Beck). In Avaṉāci the winnowing fan is thrown into the river (cf. Tri-P.). The *piḷḷaippāvu* is performed after the flag has been taken down and the *kāppu* removed (Beck); if the *piḷḷaippāvu* is followed by a *pūcai* for Pēcci, the *kāppu* is removed after the *piḷḷaippāvu* and before the *pūcai* for Pēcci (Orrai., Avan.). Pēcci *pūcai* consists of an offering of various meats (goat, chicken, pig), fish and sometimes *akattikkīrai*[2] to Pēcci (her statue will be in the front portion of the temple or in a separate shrine). The door to the Aṅkāḷammaṉ sanctum will be closed, or a cloth will be hung over the entrance, since Aṅkāḷammaṉ is vegetarian (Avan., Orrai., Iru.) Some temples will not perform the *piḷḷaippāvu*, but will have a Pēcci *pūcai* (Iru.).

That in the Coimbatore district the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and the *piḷḷaippāvu* can be parts of the same ceremony, we understand from the example of Kuppucciputūr. To explain the rituals in the cremation ground, the *pūcāri*, a Tēvar, related the myth of Vallāḷarājaṉ. Of interest to us now are three female helpers of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, called Pēcci, Caṭaicci and Pēymaciri whom the goddess sends to meet Vallāḷarājaṉ's army which is in search of the queen's murderer. After the figure of Pēcci,[3] also called Mayāṉa cakti, has been prepared in the cremation ground (earth of a termite hill is used for that purpose), three people dress up as Pecci,

[1] *araḷi* or *alari* - *pū*

[2] leaves of *coronilla grandiflora*

[3] The informant explained: 'When Aṅkāḷammaṉ goes to remove the child from the queen's womb, she goes as Pēcci; this is why we call the figure Pēcci'.

Caṭaicci and Pēymaciri. Three faces (of Pēcci, Caṭaicci and Pēymaciri) are formed with flour on a new winnowing fan. Before starting off to the cremation ground a goat is sacrificed, and its intestines and liver are used as 'props' for the 'disguise'. The goddess is brought along, but does not enter the cremation ground. Near the figure a pig is first sacrificed. Then the *pampaikkārar* gets possessed by Pēcci and removes the foetus from a pregnant goat. He puts it into the winnowing fan, and the winnowing fan is placed into a cradle which is suspended between sugarcane stalks. He then is the first to rock the cradle, followed by women who wish to have children. The *pūcāri* gave the following explanation for the pig and goat sacrifice: 'Very strong and valiant guards (*vīri* - 'heroic women') surround the fort of Vallāḷarājaṉ; anyone who wants to enter the fort has to offer a human sacrifice (*narapali*); this is what the goddess offers. We offer a goat and a pig (instead of a human being).'

In the ceremony at the Kōvai temple, the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and the *piḷḷaippāvu* were similarly combined (neither of these rituals have been performed for the last 20 years, now only a *pūcanikkāy* is sacrificed in front of the temple; the temple was established by Teluṅku Liṅgāyats, the *pūcāri* is of the same caste): The attendants of the cremation ground were paid to make a figure of Vīrabhadra in the cremation ground. They brought a human skull and a bone to the temple, which was carried back to the cremation ground by those dressed up. Intestines of a goat, its liver, together with a flower hat, were part of the Pēcci dress up. A small figure (*pāvai*) of flour was fashioned to represent the child which Pēcci had removed from the queen's stomach. At the cremation ground a pig was sacrificed, its head placed at Vīrabhadra's feet. To the 16 guards (*kāval*) surrounding him, *poṅkal* was offered. The head of the pig had to open its mouth three times, after which the party could leave the cremation ground. (No gods were taken to the cremation ground).

We find an extension of the offering of one or three heads to the figure in the ritual as it used to be performed in Kuṉṉattūr (due to financial difficulties, most rituals have been stopped): Four heads used to be placed in front of Pēcci (she has a small statue on the side of the temple); they were those of a black goat, a black chicken and a black pig, and the head of Vallāḷarājaṉ. The last head was acquired as follows: in the cremation ground the figure of Vallāḷarājaṉ was ready; a person, possessed by the goddess, tore apart the figure, picked up the head of the

figure and brought it to the temple. After the heads were laid down in front of Pēcci, a *pūcai* was performed and the heads had to 'eat' the rice placed in front of them. Instead of taking away a head from the figure, a head is brought to it in Muttaṇampālaiyam. It is the head (skull) of a human which a person who is possessed brings from the cremation ground to the figure (the figure is composed of earth from a termite hill and lies in an area ca. 150 m away from the temple). He places the skull where the figure's (Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's) head ought to be.[1] According to the informant, it is because the goddess cut off Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's head that the skull is put there, as an offering to her. Near the figure lie the heads of a goat, chicken and pig and to these food (rice) is offered. It is said that if the goat does not eat the food, hardship for the government will follow, if the chicken does not pick up the food, the priest will suffer, and if the pig refuses the food, a drought is impending. In Kuṉṉattūr the same belief is prevalent, only in a different order: if the pig refuses the food, the *nāṭu*[2] will suffer, if the goat does not eat the rice, the *pūcāri* will suffer, and if the chicken does not eat, something bad will happen to the village (*ūr*). In Muttaṇampālaiyam the three faces of the *kapparai* are those of the female guards of Vallāḷarājaṉ's fort; they are called Kāḷi, Kūḷi (a demon, spirit) and Macari (or Timiri).

All the temples discussed above celebrate their festival in Māci at the time of *civaṉrāttiri*. When the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* takes place varies from temple to temple and is either on *civaṉrāttiri*, or a day before or a day after *civaṉrāttiri*. Generally, the cremation ground ritual will be performed at night (at midnight or after midnight).

Many temples in the Coimbatore district do no longer include the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* or the *piḷḷaippāvu* in their festival (Iro., Kunna., Kovai), in other temples these rituals may never have been performed (Venk., Nattuk.). In either case, these temples presently celebrate the festival by performing special *pūcai* for the goddess or by taking her around the streets.

[1] An article on this festival appeared in the *Kōvai Mālai Muracu* of 11.4. and 18.4.1981. The informant insisted that the figure was Mayāṉaruttiri, the Amman. In the article, however, the figure was called Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ. The figure is covered with a yellow or red cloth.

[2] a larger area which includes several villages.

3.8. Salem District

In the Salem district I was able to visit only three villages: Ōmalūr, Irācipuram and Vīrapāṇṭi. In all three villages we meet with the same basic rituals discussed above, with the difference that the core rituals are tripartite: *kapparai*, *piḷḷaippāvu* and *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* (each being independent of the other). In all three temples the first of the three rituals involves the *kapparai*, a five-headed *kapparai*.[1] It is taken around the streets and anyone may dance with it, but it should not be placed on the ground and when it reaches the cremation ground only the *pūcāri* should carry it (Virap.). The *kapparai* is destroyed in or near the cremation ground. The Irācipuram informant noted that the five heads are those of Brahmā and that, according to the '*purāṇa*', only one of the heads ought to be destroyed, since Śiva plucked only one of Brahmā's heads. The informants of Ōmalūr could not say who the faces represented, but the *pampaikkārar* volunteered that the heads 'are like the human heads eaten by the goddess- that is why they are destroyed' (i.e., they are offerings). The Vīrapāṇṭi informants similarly did not know whose faces they carry around, though informant (2) stated that, since the faces get destroyed, they must represent some Asura. In Vīrapāṇṭi and Ōmalūr the *kapparai* ritual is performed on *amāvācai* day in Māci (this will be the second day of the festival), and in Irācipuram on *makācivaṉrāttiri* (again, on the second day of the festival).

Either one day or a few days later the *piḷḷaippāvu* takes place. The sequence '*mayāṉakkoḷḷai - piḷḷaippāvu*' varies: In Vīrapāṇṭi the *piḷḷaippāvu* is on the third and last day and is followed, on the same day, by the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*; in Ōmalūr the *piḷḷaippāvu* is performed two days after the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*.[2] 'We (people from the temple, i.e., *pūcāri*) dress up as a woman (in a sari), wear matted hair (*caṭai*). We make a small figure, like a child's, out of *paccai māvu* (raw flour), we place this child (*pāvu*)[3] on a banana leaf and put these into a new winnowing fan. We go around the streets dancing with the *pāvu* and stop at the houses. People will pour milk (over the figure in the winnowing fan) and give money. Finally we go to the *mayāṉam* and leave the *pāvu* there' (Omal. (1)). In Irācipuram

[1] It is made of flour on a winnowing fan, with chicken eggs as eyes. Omal.: color of the faces: middle face - black, others: yellow, red, green and white. Before the *kapparai* is constructed, blood rice is thrown up into the air (Omal., Iraci.) and before the *kapparai* leaves the temple, a goat is sacrificed (Virap., Omal.)

[2] In the case of Irācipuram, I could not clearly determine the sequence.

[3] The informant used the term *pāvu* (i.e., *pāku*) rather than *pāvai*.

moccaipparuppu (*lablab vulgaris*) is distributed to devotees while the *pillaippāvu* goes around the streets. The winnowing fan is buried in the temple at the end.

The *mayānakkollai* is not similar for these three temples and is, in the case of Vīrapānti, quite distinct from the rituals described so far. In Ōmalūr no figure at all is made in the cremation ground. Some people dress themselves as Bhadrakālī and Irulappacāmi (cleaned goat intestines are worn as garlands). They go together with the *pūcāri* to the cremation ground where they find some skulls into which they put ashes or water, which is then distributed to devotees. The ashes and water have the power to release people from the influence of malevolent spirits. Devotees will offer limes, goats and eggs in the cremation ground. In Irācipuram a figure of the Amman (one informant called it Aṅkālamman, the other Pēcci)[1] is made in the cremation ground. The goddess is brought close to the cremation ground, on the lion vehicle. A man, who sits in front of the figure, will get possessed by the goddess and, in this state, he will tear apart a goat with his teeth. The intestines and the liver are then removed from the goat and placed in the usual manner around that man's neck and into his mouth. Then they go around the streets. In Vīrapānti the sitting figure of Takkan (Daksa) is modelled from earth in the cremation ground. The goddess, together with some 40 devotees, goes to the figure. With a big sword, the head of Takkan is cut off and thrown into a fire pit (*kuntam*). Then, about a dozen men who get the *arul* of the goddess tear apart a goat with their teeth, suck out the blood, pull out the intestines and wear them as garlands and roll on the ground in a frenzy ('because Takkan's head has been cut, a goat sacrifice has to be made')[2]. Then the goddess and the devotees go around the streets, come back to the figure and place, where the figure's head had been, the head of a goat (*cemmariyātu*), and thus Takkan is brought back to life. In this ritual we recognize the myth of Daksa's sacrifice (see also below).

[1] Inside the Irācipuram temple, beside the sanctum, is the three to four meters long lying figure of a goddess with four arms, matted hair and a hooded cobra over her head. She was variously called Aṅkālamman, Pēcciyamman, Caṭaicci, Periyāṇṭicci.

[2] Explanation by informant (2), a Kavuntar whose family supplies one of the sacrificial goats.

the drummers go around the figure three times, light camphor, go around another three times and then break a coconut and the clay pot (of the *kapparai*) at the head of the figure. Devotees pick up the pieces of these. All come back to the temple by eleven at night. Right away the *uccikkapparai* (also called *cāmaṅkapparai, rattakkapparai*)[1] is taken up; it resembles a folded umbrella and is decorated with colored paper. The same procedure as with the previous *kapparai* is followed, except that for Āvuṭaiyappaṉ a *pūcaṇikkāy* is sacrificed as well. The last *kapparai* is the *pañcamukakkapparai*. It is a brass plate on which five faces are engraved. This *kapparai* is not taken to Āvuṭaiyappaṉ, otherwise the above procedure is repeated. The actual *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* takes place the following day. Inside the cremation ground, the cremation ground attendant (Veṭṭiyār) will have made a figure (measuring ca. two meters) of earth, ashes and bones (of a Brahmin's recently burned body).[2] While the *pūcāri* waits with the goddess (on the *ciṅka vākaṉam*) a few streets away from the cremation ground, the devotees, some dressed in feathers (as Aṅkāḷammaṉ) and carrying a fire pot, go inside and fall over the figure, roll on it and pick up the ashes. (According to one informant, this means that Aṅkāḷammaṉ has eaten up the figure).[3] The goddess is brought back to the temple and given a bath; a *pūcai* follows. No *piḷḷaippāvu* is performed during this festival in these three temples.

3.10. Trichi and Tanjavur districts

In these two districts, although we do come across the same basic pattern of the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and the *piḷḷaippāvu*, we will not find many temples that still perform these rituals. Furthermore, in some temples, a few elements of the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* have customarily been amalgamated or, for some reason, have become amalgamated with another ritual, the *pāriveṭṭai*.

In the Muciri (Trichi distr.) core rituals we recognize our, by now, well known pattern. The figure, composed of the ashes of a burned body, is Kāṭṭēri; in this case lamps are placed around it. A young pig is sacrificed to this figure in the cremation ground, then the figure is destroyed. In the disguise of Aṅkāḷammaṉ or Pēcci, (i.e., dressed in a sari, with garlands of intestines and a liver in the mouth) one of the *pūcāri* brings

[1] *ucci* - 'top', 'crown'; *cāmam* - 'night', 'midnight'; *rattam* - 'blood'; *pañcamukam* - 'five faces'.

[2] In 1984 the figure was made in front of the entrance of the cremation ground, a cremation ground in which Teluṅku Ceṭṭiyār burn their dead; hence the figure consisted of the ashes of a person of that caste. The *koḷḷai* did not take place in 1984, because the temple authorities did not agree to the price to be paid to the cremation ground authorities.

[3] Mr. B. Kesava Mutaliyār, Maṇiyam.

the winnowing fan to the cremation ground. On the way, women who are desirous of children offer coins. The explanation of the rituals is that Aṅkāḷamman, as Pēcci, destroyed Vallāḷarājan etc. For the past ten or fifteen years these rituals were not performed in the temple because of factionalism and disagreements within the Mutaliyār community.

In Āmūr, Kallūr and Manattaṭṭai[1] a ritual which the informants of these temples call *pārivēṭṭai* shows a remarkable similarity to the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* pattern: A small fort is constructed with stones (Amur), with strings (Kal.) or with earth (Mana.) in a spot either near the river (Kal.) or outside the village (Amur). In Kallūr and Maṇattaṭṭai there are seven such forts, while in Āmūr there is one fort with seven gardens. The goddess sits in the centre of the fort(s), a *pūcai* is performed, the *pampaikkārar* sing the story about the fort (Amur), then the fort is destroyed ('people tear apart the strings and take the pieces home' - Kal.). In Āmūr, when the fort is built by the *pampaikkārar*, devotees dress up as Aṅkāḷamman. For the destruction of the fort, someone will dress as a hunter (in Kal., two boys are dressed as hunters with bow and arrow) and approach the fort. The ear of a goat is placed inside the fort (Amur). In all three cases the fort is called Vallāḷa's fort (*-kōṭṭai*) and the Kallūr and Āmūr informants related myth 3 in connection with the ritual. In Kallūr a *piḷḷaippāvu* is offered to Pēcci (before the *pārivēṭṭai*, but no intestines etc. are worn. In Uṟaiyūr (Trichi city), the *pūcāri* does not perform a *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*, but a *piḷḷaippāvu* ritual takes place on the day of the Tamil New Year (in Cittirai).

In the Pūkkuḷam Aṅkāḷaparamēsvari temple of Trichi city a ritual in the cremation ground (*ruttirapūmiyil astipūjai* - 'bone *pūjā* in the cremation ground') takes place as part of the *makācivaṉrāttiri* festival, whereas the *piḷḷaippāvu* is celebrated separately, in the month of Āṭi (July/Aug., during the full-moon or on the last Friday of the month). On *amāvācai* (Māci) day, the priest carries a flower *kapparai*[2] from the river to the temple. According to the priest, the cremation ground ritual ought to be performed on the same day as well, but it had been shifted to the third day after *amāvācai*. That night, the priests (the informant and his father)

[1] For the information on this village I am indebted to Mr. Abdul Majeed, Registering Officer, Dept. of Archaeology, Trichi.

[2] a *puṣpa koppaṟai* (!) according to the festival notice.

dress up as Aṅkāḷammaṉ, go to the cremation ground at midnight and perform a *pūcai*. The ashes from a recently burned body are collected and distributed as *piracātam*.

The Melattūr (Tanj. distr.) Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple is located outside the village in a coconut grove which is near to the cremation ground. The *pūcāri* (a Mūppaṉār *kuṭiyāṉavar* - a farming caste)[1] neither performs the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*, nor the *piḷḷaippāvu*, because, as he said, he is afraid. His father, however, 'was a courageous man' and he used to perform both rituals and he even 'ate the bones of freshly burned bodies in the cremation ground'. In Kumpakōṇam the rituals centre around Pēcci. (The inside walls of the temple depict the story of Vallāḷarājaṉ). Two men dress up, one as Pēcci, one as Pāvāṭairāyaṉ. Pēcci will drink the blood of a sacrificed animal and eat the bones of a dead body in the cremation ground. The Aṅkāḷaparamēcuvari temple on South Main Street in Tañcāvūr has a very small income, and the core rituals are not performed. A flower *kapparai* used to be carried around the streets at midnight on *makācivaṉrāttiri*.

3.11. Madurai and Ramnad districts

The further south we come, the lesser will be the possibility that we chance upon an Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple which celebrates the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. None of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ *pūcāri* in the Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts knew the Vallāḷarājaṉ myth,and I did not come across any Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples in these districts in which the *piḷḷaippāvu* is performed, although Pēcci does not disappear from the temples. Some temples in the Madurai district still do celebrate the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. In the Nattam temple[2] the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* is repeated only every four to five years. A five-headed *kapparai* with the faces of Kāḷi, Kapāli, Brahmā, Rudra and Visnu is brought to the cremation ground, where the *pūcāri* draws a circle (*cakkaram*) with ash, into which the *kapparai* is set. (Years ago, there was also a figure in the circle). A *pūcaṇikkāy* is sacrificed to the *kapparai*, water and rice balls are thrown up into the air (they do not fall down),[3] and finally, the *kapparai* is demolished; (the *pūcaṇikkāy* replaces a goat, chicken and pig, according to the *pūcāri*).

[1] He is the fifth generation of *pūcāri* at the temple, but Aṅkāḷammaṉ is not his *kula teyvam*.

[2] The temple is called Akōravīrapattiracuvāmi Kōvil; the three main deities are: Akōravīrapattiracuvāmi, Pommiyammāḷ and Aṅkāḷaparamēsvari.

[3] The rice balls are believed to be eaten by the deities (or spirits) that are in the air. See also below.

Some may remember the Aṅkāḷamman temple of Vāḷāntūr (about 25 km W of Madurai) from Louis Dumont's book on the Pramalai Kaḷḷar. Dumont relates how the goddess came to Vāḷāntūr and he also gives a short description of the festival procedure,[1] which, incidentally, has not changed at all. When I visited the temple the first time (Dec. 1980) the Nāyakkar *pūcāri* told me that the *mayāṇakkoḷḷai* had not been performed for the last twenty years, due to disagreements within the Tēvar community. In June 1982 I heard, by chance, that the festival was being held again, but unfortunately, when I arrived in the village, the *kapparai* rituals had already ended. Nevertheless, the huge figure of Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi on top of which the five-headed *kapparai* lay, was still there. The festival had started three days before full moon in Vaikāci (May/June). On the second day of the festival a *pūkkapparai* had been brought to the 'cremation ground'.[2] On the third day, at one o'clock in the morning, the *aintumukakkapparai*[3] was taken to the figure of Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi by the Iruḷappacāmi *cāmiyāṭi*.[4] The figure was on a plot of land about 300 m away from the temple. It was ca. six m long, covered from head to toe with small white snail shells (*caṅku*).[5] It had two arms, two stretched out legs, a tiny face, two breasts, female genitals and long matted hair (*caṭai*). When I inquired why this obviously female figure was called Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi, I was given the answer: 'Mācāṇakkaruppaṉ *penpiḷḷaittāṉ*!', i.e., Mācāṇakkaruppaṉ *is* a woman.[6] Around the figure, at about one-half meter distance from each other, were white cone-shaped *kāval*, said to number 108. The *kapparai* was a bamboo structure on which five faces were tied. These were made with winnowing fans,[7] on the backside of which flour had been modelled into the shape of faces. The faces' eyes were chicken eggs, each face was adorned with the inevitable big moustache and each had a tongue sticking out. At this figure a black male goat, a pig and a rooster were sacrificed, their blood mixed with rice and thrown up into the air. (Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi lies under a

[1] Dumont (1957), p. 391.

[2] *uttirapūmi = uttarapūmi?* 'Northern ground'. Names and terms are spelled as they appeared in the festival notice.

[3] Whose five faces, the *pūcāri* was not sure about. Dumont mentions 7 faces (p.391).

[4] 'god-dancer'. Here, the person who 'dances' the god Iruḷappacāmi.

[5] The snails had been boiled, to prevent them from sneaking away from the figure.

[6] Karuppucuvāmi denotes a male person or god. Cf. below, 5.2.

[7] The broad, flat end of it is tied, so that the winnowing fan looks like a triangle. The tied end of the winnowing fan becomes the top of the face.

iluppai tree (*bassia longifolia*) whose branches are never cut, due to the following incident which took place long ago: some hunters had cut off some branches of the tree, and, that year, the blood rice, which had been thrown up into the air, fell to the ground - since that time nobody cuts down branches). 108 bananas and 108 coconuts were offered to the *kāval*. The figure does not get demolished, but is left to disintegrate.

The Talaiyāri Kurunātaṉ Temple in Maturai town houses the following five main gods: Kurunātaṉ, Vīrabhadra, Irulappaṉ, Aṅkālammaṉ and Pēcciyammaṉ. During Māci *civaṉrāttiri* (night), the *pūcāri* (a Vellāḷa Piḷḷai), who is dressed up with matted hair and is possessed, takes a *kapparai* of five faces representing these five deities to the cremation ground. Before the *pūcāri* leaves the temple, a goat is cut near the Pēcciyammaṉ shrine (she is the only non-vegetarian among the gods), some blood of it is taken to the cremation ground. At the cremation ground a body will be burning (often that of a Brahmin woman). The *pūcāri* places the *kapparai* at the head of the corpse. A red cock (*cēval*), a small black goat and a small black pig are sacrificed. Their blood is mixed with rice, which the *pūcāri* throws up into the air, in the dark, some distance away from the body. Nobody should see this and even the *pūcāri* will not turn his head.[1] Water is placed before the heads of the animals and they have to 'drink' it (i.e., open their mouths) to show that the deities are satisfied with the sacrifice. The *pūcāri*, still in a state of possession, will remove, from the burning body, a small bone which has some flesh on it and chew it (when he takes the bone, his fingers do not get burned and the fire does not cause him any pain). Some ashes are picked up at the cremation ground and later distributed as *piracātam*. After the sacrifice is completed, the *pampaikkārar* takes the *kapparai* to the river and submerges it (again, nobody ought to watch him doing this). He then brings the frame of the *kapparai* back to the temple.[2]

In none of the above three temples had the *pūcāri* ever performed or seen the *piḷḷaippāvu* ritual. To Pēcci, as to other non-vegetarian gods,

[1] What happens if someone watches this, was related by the *pūcāri*'s son who also participates in the rituals: 'Once a man who did not take the cremation ground ritual very seriously, hid himself in a tree and watched how the blood rice was thrown up. The shock he got from what he saw was so great that he was seized with a fever, and he died within three days.'

[2] The *pampaikkārar* receives the sacrificed animals.

various meat dishes will be offered, but at that time the door to the Aṅkāḷamman shrine has to be closed.

We notice that, in the Talaiyāri Kurunātan temple, no attempt has been made to resolve the dichotomy of having on the one hand, a *cutta* Aṅkāḷamman inside the temple and of bringing, on the other hand, a *acutta* Aṅkāḷamman (on the *kapparai*) to the cremation ground. The *pūcāri* stressed that the sacrifice in the cremation ground is necessary, for, it recharges the deities with power, especially Aṅkāḷamman, and with this power the goddess is able to protect the *pūcāri* and his family. That the ambivalence of the goddess is also known to the *pūcāri*, we may surmise from his remark that the five heads (i.e., the *kapparai*) are partly *kāval* deities. (Cf. Viluppuram, where the *pūcāri* also equated the *kapparai* - Aṅkāḷamman with a *kāval*).

The Urappuli and Paramakkuti (Ramnad district) temples do not have any cremation ground rituals, although the *pūcāri* of the latter asserted that, some 20 years ago, they did indeed have some ceremony in the cremation ground during which the foetus of a goat was rocked in a cradle (cf. Kuppucciputūr). Both temples celebrate a festival on *makācivanrāttiri* (see below '*alaku niruttal*').

3.12 Tirunelveli district

In Vīrapāṇṭi (Salem distr.) we noted that a different myth supplied the base for the cremation ground ritual, namely Daksa's sacrifice. The same myth is at the root of a ritual which is performed in Kīḻākkulam and in Kīḻapāvūr and which, although it does not, strictly speaking, fit the pattern of our core rituals, we feel justified in including here, since certain parallels to the *mayāṇakkollai* and to myths 3 and 12 are evident.

On the sixth day at the Kīḻākkulam festival (which is around *makācivanrāttiri*) a *puṅkapparai* is taken in procession around the streets. On the eighth day an Ācāri from a different village[1] is dressed up in black knickers and a cap decorated with frills and tassels. In one hand he carries a spear, in the other a sword. To his back is attached a huge picture of Vīrabhadra garlanded with flowers, and on his sides are tied two poles on which 18 weapons are fastened. This Vīrabhadra, together with other men dressed as Karuppaṇacāmi (with a spear), Mātacāmi, Irulappacāmi and Pēcci (who carries nim leaves and a trident) goes in procession in

[1] This Ācāri consecrated the temple and supervises the festival, though it is the Tēvar community of Kīḻākkulam that is in charge of the temple.

front of a lion vehicle carrying the goddess and a bull vehicle carrying Śiva Naṭarājā.

On the day before *makācivaṉrāttiri*, Dakṣa's head is taken around the streets to show that it has been cut off (while the head is carried from house to house, money for the festival is collected). The head is a brass face nailed onto a wooden plank. Beneath the face is tied a small clay pot containing cooked rice and a copper coin. After the money has been collected, the head is brought to the *kāṭu*[1], the flowers on it are removed, a cock is sacrificed (this the *pampaikkārar* receives, who is the only one allowed to play his instrument at that time), and the clay pot is broken. The head is then submerged briefly in water and brought back to the temple and re-used the following year. In Kīḻapāvūr the ritual is the same, except that there Dakṣa's head is made of flour, modelled onto a winnowing fan ('the head looks like that of an *arakkar*'), and the eyes are chicken eggs. This head, after it has been carried through the streets, is brought to the cremation ground. There a cock is sacrificed, the head is smashed and then buried in a pit. Here, as above, only the *pampaikkārar* comes to the cremation ground. One of the informants mentioned that when they bury the head, they shout 'Vīra Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār' (Ceṅkuntar Mutaliyār are in charge of the temple), because it was their community that had helped Śiva destroy Takkaṉ (Dakṣa). He also said that there is a poem about a Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ who cut off one thousand heads and sat on a throne, but he did not know more about it.

Our rather lengthy excursion into the core rituals had a double purpose; first of all it was to show that the basic pattern of the ritual(s), or elements of it, are the same throughout Tamilnadu, regardless of the caste to which the *pūcāri* of the respective temple belongs; and secondly, it was to give us an insight into the many variations which have evolved from the basic pattern. On the one hand, the underlying similarity, that is, the substratum of the rituals as they are performed in the various temples, indicate that the core rituals reflect a basic trait of the goddess which has to be expressed in the ritual complex; on the other hand, the variants tell us that certain considerations such as purity, lack of funds, community cohesion or feelings, and geographical considerations can have varying degrees of influence on both the performance of the ritual and on the myth associated with the ritual.

[1] *kāṭu* - 'an uncultivated plot of land', 'cremation ground', 'forest' etc. Cf. below on its meaning in relation to the goddess.

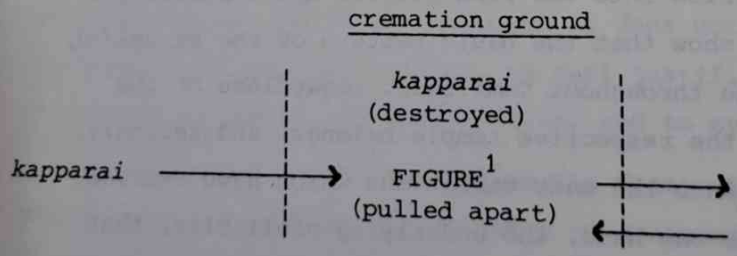
Reserving a discussion of the rituals in the Tirunelveli temples for later, we can define the components of the core rituals as follows:

Core rituals

1. *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*: consists of two elements
 A. the figure in the cremation ground
 B. the *kapparai*

2. *piḷḷaippāvu*: consists of two elements
 C. a winnowing fan containing a small figure, which is taken around the streets by
 D. a person wearing intestines as garlands

We are in fact dealing with two basic patterns, one in which the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and the *piḷḷaippāvu* are regarded as separate from each other and one in which they are joined. The first distinct set of variations is on the ritual level, the performance level and depends on a) the relationship of the elements A,B,C and D to each other, that is, how closely they are linked or how far they are removed from each other and b) which of the elements (A,B,C,D) are present or absent in the performance. The major segments of the core rituals on the performance level could be charted as follows:



1. a *kapparai* is taken around the streets and to the cremation ground, where it is destroyed (e.g., Teli, Perum., Mdr-Culai).
2. a *kapparai* is placed at the figure's head in the cremation ground and destroyed there (e.g., Mad.Gu., Orrai., Iru.)
3. The figure is pulled apart, its pieces (*piracātam*) are taken by or distributed to devotees (e.g., Valpt. etc.)

[1] 'figure' includes any element which can take the figure's place (and role), i.e., ash-figure, dead body, a doll, circle.

4. Intestines and liver are pulled out of the figure (or substitute goat); a *pillaippāvu* is made (Teli, Kuppucci., Vilu., etc.)
5. The person with the *pillaippāvu* goes to the cremation ground / goes around the streets (Cit., Tinti., Tri-P.)
6. The *kapparai* represents the goddess who removes the child from the figure and carries it away in the winnowing fan (Beck, Orrai.).

The second set of variations we get is on the representational level, that is, what the elements (A,B,C,D) are seen as being representative of by the performer of the ritual or the informant (devotee), i.e., what names he gives to the elements. These names are often, but by no means always, in correlation with the myth which the ritual is supposed to represent. (These will be discussed below).

4. Some reasons for the variations of the core rituals

Some of the variations occurring in the above two sets can be explained by the above mentioned considerations of purity, lack of funds, community cohesion and location. To give but a few examples:

4.1. Purity

Aṅkāḷammaṉ is basically a *cutta* goddess, she does not receive non-vegetarian offerings; as such she cannot take part in rituals which involve such offerings. To take her place in the more ferocious proceedings of the ritual, a substitute is found: Pēcci or Kāḷi (Vilu.); or we can say that Aṅkāḷammaṉ's nature is simply split, her *saumya, gaura* aspect bearing her own name, while her *ghora, kāla* aspect receives a different name. Depending on how much the purity aspect is stressed by a particular community, the dark side of the goddess may become permanently identified with a different deity (Pēcci) who in turn will be called *avatāram* of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, in order to preserve the link with Aṅkāḷammaṉ; or all impure rituals will be replaced by pure rituals (vegetable offerings may replace animal sacrifices), or the rituals may be stopped altogether (Kovai). The case of Macāṉiyammaṉ illustrates well what consequences this severance of the two aspects of Aṅkāḷammaṉ can have on the performance and the representational levels: in Kuppucciputūr there is still a close link between Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Pēcci and Mayāṉa Makācakti. Pēcci is the *avatāram* of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Mayāṉa Makācakti is the permanent form of Pēcci, all three goddesses are served by the same *pūcāri*.

In Pallaṭam the *pūcāri* of Macāṉiyāttā is a Nāyakkar, while Aṅkāḷamman is served by a Piḷḷai. The only link between the two goddesses during the Māci *civaṉrāttiri* ceremony is the *kapparai*. The Piḷḷai priest was not able to recall whose faces are on the *kapparai*, he associated them neither with Aṅkāḷamman, nor with Pēcci (there is a Pēcci in the temple who receives non-vegetarian offerings). He said that Macāṉiyāttā was the Amman who once, as a ghost in the cremation ground, caused troubles to the villagers in order to test the king's faith. When the king came to the cremation ground, he recognized the goddess and called her Macāṉiyāttā. The goddess gave him the boon of a child (a reverse of myth 3!). The Nāyakkar *pūcāri* identified Macāṉiyāttā with Vallālarājaṉ's wife.[1] Not only is the ritual link between the two temples weak, but also there is hardly any concord on the mythic level. According to the Piḷḷai, Macāṉiyāttā is the *akōra rūpam* (the ghost) of the Amman (Aṅkāḷamman), while according to the *pūcāri* of Macāṉiyāttā, Macāṉiyāttā is not Aṅkāḷamman, but her sister-in-law (i.e., Vallālarājaṉ is the younger brother of Aṅkāḷamman). Vallālarājaṉ, says the Nāyakkar, is also Śiva! This completes the circle: Macāṉiyāttā becomes an *avatāram* of Pārvatī, a goddess in her own right. The next step would be to turn the *acutta* Macāṉiyāttā into a *cutta* goddess. An extreme case of this 'purification' process we find in Āṉaimalai. Here Mācāṉiyamman *and* her cremation ground '*avatāram*' are *cutta* goddesses, and although we recognize in the *mayāṉa pūcai* ritual the pattern of the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*, there is no evident trace of a connection with Aṅkāḷamman; a totally new myth has been created, one which suits Mācāṉiyamman's 'elevated' status.

The government prohibition of animal sacrifices in temples has done its share in accelerating the purification or 'sanskritization' process. Mēl Malaiyaṉūr is a case in point. Both the temple's popularity and its once great income[2] may have been reasons for this temple coming under somewhat stricter surveillance, by the HRCE board, than is the case for some of the smaller temples. That animal sacrifices were part of the ritual performance in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, we know from E. Thurston's descriptions (see above). That the notice of 1950 (which hangs in the temple), prohibiting such sacrifices, had its desired and continued effect, we may surmise from the facts that in literature dated as early as 1960,

[1] The Aṅkāḷamman temple is about 15 to 20 mins. walk away from the Macāṉiyāttā temple. The latter is just big enough to contain the goddess and her children; it consists of a simple thatch roof. The goddess is *acutta*.

[2] According to the *pūcāri*s the temple's income has dwindled in the past years.

the Aṅkāḷamman of Mēl Malaiyanūr was described as a vegetarian goddess,[1] and that no animal sacrifices presently occur during the festival. A curious side effect (curious, because only Cempaṭavar officiate as *pūcāri* in this temple) of this movement towards 'brahmanization' is the use of Sanskrit words in the Mēl Malaiyanūr festival notice: *piramoṟcavam* (*brāhmotsava*) instead of *tiruviḻā*, or, *ratam* (*ratha*) for *tēr*; *tuvajārōkaṇam* (*dhvajārohaṇa*) for *koṭiyēṟṟutal*.

4.2. Lack of funds

Many temples cannot afford to celebrate an elaborate festival. Much of the festival is financed with money donated by devotees. If the communities worshipping at a particular temple are poor and if no generous donors are forthcoming, the whole festival may be at stake or the festival may be altered according to the funds available. There is an interesting order of priority which determines what items may be reduced or enlarged upon in the festival. For reasons of prestige, things which are 'modern' or which enjoy popularity often take precedence over older customs. Thus, for instance, more money will be spent on the electrification of the goddess' chariot or on sound equipment (for playing Tamil film songs during the festival) than on prolonging the time of the festival or on hiring extra musicians (drummers). Sometimes, lack of money will have a direct effect on the performance of a ritual: the *pūcāri* of the Rātāpuram temple said that they cannot afford to perform the *pillaippāvu* as it should be performed (i.e., wearing the intestines of a goat, etc.), instead they simply wear some thread (*nūl*) to symbolize the intestines, and with their hands they pour out milk for women who wish to get pregnant. In 1980 the Vālājapettai Nāttār could not perform the *mayānakkollai*. Since there had been a drought, villagers could not afford to donate much money, and the festival had to be financed by the Nāttār community alone (many of them have apparently left the village in recent years). Instead of the usual festival, *pūcai* were performed in the temple, music was played through loudspeakers, but the goddess was not taken around the streets. In the Kunnattūr Aṅkāḷamman temple only *pūcai* is performed during the Māci festival (which lasts one day). As far as the informant could remember, the last time the *mayānakkollai* and the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* (there was a round

[1] In the play *Aṅkāḷa paramēsvari makattumeṉṉum paramacivam piramma ciraṅkoyta tūruvācar paṅka nāṭakam*, by V.R.P. Nārāyanacāmi Tācaṉ.

kuṇṭam) had been performed was 30 years ago. There were various factors which led to the neglect of this temple: a) problems on the administrative level (frequent change of trustees) coupled with a lack of strong participation or interest in the temple by one community or another and b) lack of money. Close to the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple are two other Ammaṉ temples, one for Māriyammaṉ and one for Poṅkāḷiyammaṉ. The Poṅkāḷiyammaṉ temple is the biggest of the three, and hence money is spent for its festival (in Vaikāci - a *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* and a *tēr tiruviḻā* are celebrated), rather than for the other, smaller temples.

4.3. Community cohesion

We have already mentioned two places where disagreements within the community led to a temporary suspension of large festival activities (Muc., Valan.). Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples are, on the whole, temples which were originally established by a clan or family of a particular caste, and it would be this group (the descendants of the founder) that would feel responsible for the maintenance of the temple and the proper celebration of their *kula teyvam*'s festivals. As long as the community associated with the temple is prosperous and not fraught with dissension, the temple is likely to flourish. The impoverishment of a group, which often results in the migration of families to a different village or from a village to a town, not only weakens the economic basis of a temple, but tends to undermine the group's strength and its ability to maintain its rights over the temple (e.g., Iraya.). If groups of other castes take an active interest in the temple, or if the village as a whole supports the temple, the danger that the cult of the goddess in that particular village will disintegrate remains small. If, however, the temple has to rely on government support and the help of a few families alone, chances will be great that, in time, much of the ritual complex will change or disappear. Aṅkāḷammaṉ of Veṅkampūr had been brought by Cettiyār (see above, Ch. I, B.4.). The temple's large courtyard and many subsidiary shrines are a testimony to its wealthy founders, indeed, the temple used to own forest and cultivated land.[1] As the story goes, soon after the Cettiyār had settled, a disaster had

[1] According to the informant, there exists a direct relationship between the government's take-over of the temple and the gradual loss of the temple's land.

befallen the village which had caused many families, including Cettiyār, to leave the place. The two Cettiyār sisters, Veṅkāttā and Cittāttā, who had been performing the *pūcai* for the goddess, had placed the goddess in charge of a boy of the Cōḻiya Veḷḷāḷar caste (the present *pūcari* is a descendant of this person).[1] The Māci festival of this temple lasts three days and includes neither the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* nor the *piḷḷaippāvu*. Whether or not these rituals were ever performed, we do not know,[2] however, close to the temple's outer gate but within the compound, there are the remnants of a figure made of earth. According to the *pūcāri* it is Pūṅkāvaṉam Ammaṉ,[3] the '*cāmi* for whom one goes to the cremation ground, the *avatāram* who eats raw and burned bodies (*paccai piṇattai, cutta piṇattai tiṉṟa avatāram*), who eats leg and arm bones, brains and heads', etc. A *muppūcai* (triple-sacrifice), at midnight, of a black goat, a black chicken and a black pig may be performed to this goddess even now, but only on the initiative of private persons who also have to pay for it.

Whatever the reasons may be for discontinuing a ritual: poverty of a community, appointment of a *pūcāri* of a different community, or simply disinterest; if a ritual is not performed for many years, chances are, that it will soon be forgotten. The *pūcāri* of Īroṭu Aṅkāḷammaṉ said that he would not know how to perform a *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. They had stopped the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* during his grandfather's time, that is, when they (Kavuntar) had been appointed *pūcāri*. Now the *makācivaṉṟāttiri* festival consists of special *pūjā* and *apiṣēkam* for Aṅkāḷammaṉ on one day and non-vegetarian offerings for the side-deities (Pēcciyammaṉ, Iruḷappaṉ, Vīrapattiraṉ, Maturai Vīraṉ) on the next day.

4.4. Geographical considerations

If we posit Mēl Malaiyaṉūr as the epicentre of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ cult in Tamilnadu, we may in all likeliness expect a greater possibility of change within the ritual complex in areas farther removed from the centre than in those close to it. Roughly speaking, we can say that the waves of the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* and the *piḷḷaippāvu* (at least as far as Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples are concerned) disappear approximately south of Maturai; this

[1] Two statues of these sisters are in the temple. There are about 20 Cōḻiya Veḷḷāḷar families in the village now.

[2] As far as the *pūcāri* could remember, they had not been performed.

[3] or Pūṅkāvaṉattāttā. There used to be a six feet high termite hill close to this figure.

goes hand in hand with a drastic decrease in the number of Aṅkāḷamman temples in the southernmost districts. The two core myths (No. 3 and 12) similarly are not found in these districts. The association of Śiva's brahminicide with the core rituals is much less widespread than that of the Vallāḷarājan myth; the former myth is current in the North and South Arcot districts, in the Salem district (Iraci.) and in Madras city, i.e., in areas close to Mēl Malaiyanūr. The Vallāḷarājan myth reaches into the Coimbatore, Trichi and Tanjavur districts as well, but stops north of Maturai, (see Map I). The distribution of these myths allows for certain changes on the representational level: in areas where Śiva's brahminicide is not linked with the core rituals, the *kapparai* has been interpreted in the light of the Vallāḷarājan myth, i.e., as being the head(s) of the goddess or the heads of guards of Vallāḷa's fort (Coimbatore); in areas where neither myth is attached to the rituals, the heads become those of various deities (Madurai district). Within the Vallāḷarājan myth itself we find regional variations: around the epicentre, it is Aṅkāḷamman herself who kills the king and queen, in the Coimbatore, Trichi and Tanjavur areas, Aṅkāḷamman does these deeds in her form of Pēcci. This change of Aṅkāḷamman into Pēcci may also be partly responsible for a split on the ritual performance level, namely the division of the core rituals into two separate rituals, the *mayāṉakkollai* and the *pillaippāvu* (Coimbatore, Trichi, Tanjavur areas). Another regional variation is, of course, Macāṉiyamman, her presence apparently being confined to the Coimbatore and Salem areas.

5. The elements of the core rituals

When we look at the core rituals, the question arises as to whether we are in fact dealing with one ritual which in some cases became split into two, or whether two independent rituals (*mayāṉakkollai*, *pillaippāvu*) were in some cases joined into one. It is a question to which there is no definite answer. Even in Thurston's accounts of the *mayāṉakkollai* (at the turn of the century) one cannot establish a clear dividing line between the *mayāṉakkollai*, which has as its basis the myth of Vallāḷarājan and the *mayāṉakkollai*, which is based on the myth of Śiva's brahminicide: both rituals take place in the cremation ground, in both rituals there is a *kollai* (scramble for things), in neither ritual do we find a figure

made of ashes, but both rituals involve some cremated bodies. The only remarkable difference is that in one case a person wears the intestines and carries a winnowing fan. If we now substitute the burning bodies with a figure made of ashes, and if we dress up people who have made vows, not as Śiva, but as the goddess in her *akōra rūpam*, we end up with more or less exactly the same rituals (cf. Valpt., Valpettai., Tinti.). Even the *kapparai* cannot be used as a distinguishing element, it has been absorbed into the Vallāḷarājaṉ myth simply with a different value assigned to it (Vilu., Coimbatore area). When we now try to correlate the two myths with the performance of the rituals in the various places of Tamilnadu, we enter a land of confusion.

The representational value assigned to the elements of the rituals do not, in many cases, tally with the myth: if Śiva's brahminicide, in the form of the *kapparai*, comes to the cremation ground and is destroyed there by the goddess, and if we may assume that the goddess, in her fury, eats the dead bodies, then why is the figure in the cremation ground[1] the goddess? (Pārvatī, Valpt.; Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Rat.), or even Mayāṉavīraṉ (Tinti.)? If the goddess comes to the cremation ground to rip open Vallāḷarāṇī's stomach, and the *kapparai*, in this case, is the goddess, why is the *kapparai* destroyed in the cremation ground (Iru., etc.), and why is the figure (i.e., Vallāḷarāṇī) also the goddess (Kuppucci., Orrai.: Pēcci)?

How can we account for the inconsistencies? The most obvious explanation which springs to mind is that the rituals predate the myths. If this is the case, we may well ask why these particular myths were attached to the rituals. Certainly some points of conjunction must have been realized, some correspondence must have been thought to exist between the ritual and the myths. The next question is: if there are such points of contact between myth and ritual, why don't we find a greater conformity in the application of the characters in the myths with the ritual elements? Why, for instance, is the figure in the cremation ground not consistently called 'wife of Vallāḷarājaṉ' where this myth is made the reason for the core rituals?

If the *pūcāri* calls the figure 'Pēcci' instead of 'Vallāḷarājaṉ's wife', it is because, in his eyes, the figure is Pēcci, no matter how

[1] i.e., if this figure is, in fact, a respresentation of a dead body. See below.

inconsistent this may appear when compared with the myth. On the one hand, the *pūcāri* considers the myth relevant enough to cite it as an explanation for the rituals and to have it sung by the *pampaikkārar* during the festival, on the other hand, he often sees no need to correlate the mythic elements with those of the rituals. If he does not do so, it can only mean that to him ritual and myth are not contradictory, at least subconsciously; in other words, the myth may be complementary to the ritual, but the value the *pūcāri* assigns to the ritual elements is not so much determined by the myth as it is by his notions or feelings about, or his relationship to, the ritual elements. In the following, we shall analyze the ritual elements (i.e., the *kapparai*, the figure in the cremation ground and the *pillaippāvu*); in doing so, we shall take into consideration informants' own ideas and shall show how these are supported by similar notions found in literary sources.

In order to analyze the elements, it may be useful to distinguish three levels:

1. presentational: by this we mean what is seen, the form of the element; in the case of the *kapparai*, e.g., a structure with three or five heads, etc.

2. representational: by this is meant what name the informants give to the element, e.g., the informant may call the three heads of the *kapparai* 'heads of Brahmā'.

3. essential: this level describes the essence of the element, i.e., the associations with the element, the ideas behind it; e.g., the association of the *kapparai* with the skull, of the skull with hunger, etc.

5.1. The *kapparai*

Presentational: The *kapparai* has one, three or five heads or faces.[1] Sometimes it is constructed with winnowing fans on which a number of faces are modelled of flour etc.;[2] sometimes the faces are made of wood, while at other times, the *kapparai* may simply be a solitary metal face. If the *kapparai* is of permanent material, it will not be destroyed, but reused. The faces may be male or female or both (Mad.Gu.), their appearance ought to be frightening: the faces have big, bulging eyes, fangs, tongues which

[1] If it has more than five faces, they should be of uneven number (cf. Valan. - Dumont).

[2] A dough is made consisting of rice flour (*arici māvu*), wheat flour (*maitā māvu*) and the creamy substance of

stick out. There seems to be no prescription for the color of the faces (we find green, red, white, black, blue). A pot is tied beneath the faces. The pot contains a *māviḷakku* (and/or other items, cf. Valpt.), and it is, in some cases, broken in the cremation ground (Mdr.Culai). No particular importance seems to be attached to this pot (cf. Valpettai), but the light inside the pot may signify that the *kapparai* has life (cf. Valpt., where a light is brought to the figure in the cremation ground shortly before the figure is given life). The faces of the *kapparai* suggest a similarity to a mask[1] (cf. Teli; or Vilu., where the person who carries the *kapparai* covers his face with a cloth). We have already noted that the *kapparai* is often called *mukakkapparai* (face(s) *kapparai*).

Representational: The faces are those of Brahmā, the Trimūrti, the goddess: Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Pēcci, of various gods (Mad.Gu.), guards of Vallāḷarāja̲n's fort, of Asuras etc.

Essential: The *kapparai*, as heads of Brahmā, is identified by informants with the *piramakapālam*, the head or skull of Brahmā which got stuck onto Śiva's hand, then onto Devī's; by extension it is the begging bowl[2] which Śiva, as Kapālin, carries and with which the goddess goes begging in Vallāḷarāja̲n's fort. What is the nature of the *kapalam*? It is hungry; its hunger can never be satisfied: Śiva becomes emaciated because the skull eats all the food (myth 12). 'Once when Śiva as *pēyāṇṭi*[3] walked all over the world, he came to a lake and being very thirsty, he bent down to drink, but the skull quickly drank up all the water, leaving only mud' (Rat.). Just as the skull's hunger or thirst is insatiable, so can the begging bowl never be filled: 'The old woman (the goddess) agreed to deliver the child of Vallāḷarāja̲n's wife on condition that the king fill her begging bowl with grains. He filled her bowl with grains, he even put jewels inside it, but the bowl never got full, no matter how much he put inside it' (Iraci.).[4] A *pūcāri*'s comment on the

[1] This was also suggested by Dr. V. Venugopal, Madurai Kamaraj University.

[2] *kapparai* - 'the vessel of a religious mendicant for receiving alms' (Winsl.). Skt. *karpara* - 'a cup, pot, bowl; the skull, cranium' (MW).

[3] A mendicant possessed by a *pēy*.

[4] Cf. Oppert (1893), p. 468: About 'the skull of the torn-off head of Brahman [held by Ellamma]. This skull is said to attract all the blood of men and beasts that is shed in the world, and yet cannot get full.' Cf. Dessigane (1964), p. 43, Kāñcip. (1910), p. 129 *vayiravīcappaṭalam*: Viṣnu cuts his forehead and lets his blood flow into the skull, but the skull never gets full (verse 31).

kapālam was: 'I was told that it (*kapālam*) is such a terrific thing, even if you put the whole world in it, it still will be empty' (Amur). The *kapālam*'s greed and hunger leads to its destruction. Rather than leaving a crumb to the (other) spirits in the cremation ground, it jumps off Śiva's hand: 'The goddess made three balls of rice, two she threw onto the ground and the third she scattered in many pieces. The *piramakatti* thought: 'Maybe someone else will get at these pieces,' and it got down from Śiva's hand to pick up the pieces' (Rat.). The *piramakapālam*'s extreme hunger and thirst reveal its nature as a spirit (*pēy*).[1] The skull likes blood rice (myth 12); blood rice is often thrown up into the air for the *pēy*, *picācu* (the rice does not fall down, i.e., is eaten) during the *mayānakkollai* and the *pillaippāvu* rituals (Orrai., Mad. Gu., Valan., Salem temples). A story from Ōmalūr illustrates further the *kapparai*'s kinship with the spirits: Once when the people from the temple were going around the streets with the *kapparai* at midnight - the present *pampaikkārar*'s grandfather was carrying it - it happened that, suddenly, the man with the *kapparai* was lifted up into the air by the spirits and deposited on a tamarind tree (*puliya maram*). The *pampaikkārar*'s son or grandson, who usually carried a knife with him, quickly cut off some flesh from his leg and threw it up into the tree. The spirits released the man on the tree and he was able to come down (informant (1)). Whether the story is true or not, it places the *kapparai* into the company of spirits. (People in Tamilnadu say that the Tamarind tree is a favourite place for spirits). Various informants mentioned the danger involved in carrying the *kapparai* (Valpt., Tiruva., Mel.). Because it is dangerous, the *kapparai* should be destroyed. We have seen that it is effective against evil spirits, it is used to exorcise them (this is not contradictory, since the deity who removes an ill is also its cause - more on this later). Spirits (*pēy*) are very fond of human blood, flesh and entrails. In the Caṅkam Literature (*Puṟanāṉūṟu*) we find descriptions of spirits (*pēy*) who wander around in the cremation ground (238.1-5), who dig into the wounds of warriors fallen in battle (62.2-5), of female spirits with gaping mouths (356.1-4), who eat the fat and meat of dead bodies (359.4-8),

[1] See, for instance, the behaviour of the *bhūta* Pañjurli (a Tuluva deity). The first thing which the *bhūta* says, after having been created, is: 'I am thirsty'. The *bhūta* Kallurti who lives in a tree, similarly asks to be given something to drink. Burnell (1897) I.A. 26, p. 50, p. 64.

and in the medieval work *Kaliṅkattup paraṇi*, whole chapters are dedicated to these spirits. (We shall have more to say about them later). From the hungry *kapālam* and the hungry spirit, it is a small step to the hungry goddess, Pēcci (the female *pēy*). In Kumpakōṇam the man dressed up as Pēcci eats blood and human bones in the cremation ground and he is said to drink the milk of fifteen tender cocoanuts, his thirst cannot be stilled.[1]

The *kapparai* or the *piramakapālam* is often equated with an Asura, a demon subdued by the goddess. It is the demon depicted under her foot. The asuric and inherently dangerous and powerful qualities of the *kapālam* may have led to its multiplicity.[2] In myth 12 Śiva cuts off the 1000 heads of Brahmā. The Rātāpuram version of the same myth elaborates:

> 'Śiva plucked off the middle head of Brahmā. A new head sprouted. Śiva plucked this one, again a new head appeared. This continued until Śiva fell down tired. He called his brother-in-law (Viṣṇu) and said: 'What should I do, I am so tired, this thing (the appearance of new heads) doesn't stop.' Viṣṇu said: 'Count how many heads there are!' Śiva counted the heads. There were 999. Viṣṇu said: 'Pluck the thousandth head and keep it in your hand.' Śiva did so and the blood spurted out, and Brahmā fainted.'

Śiva is told by Viṣṇu to keep the head in his hand, as in myth 3, Vīrabhadra is told to hold Vallāḷakaṇṭaṉ's head. We are not told the reason for this, but the *Brahma Purāṇa*[3] provides an answer: 'Brahmā's fifth head was helping the demons to devour the gods. When the gods asked Viṣṇu to cut it off, he said: 'If the head is cut off it will destroy the universe.' They praised Śiva, who agreed to cut off the head and hold it, since the earth could not bear it and the ocean would

[1] Cf. Oppert (1893), p. 487: The woman possessed by Aṅgāramma will be 'consuming pails full of saffron-water and eating heaps of margosa leaves.'

[2] Demons or Asuras often have many heads (e.g., Rāvaṇa). Cf. Shulman (1979) on the *Catakaṇṭarāvaṇaṉ katai*, where Rāvaṇa has 100 heads and the other Rākṣasas all have a multitude of heads (and arms), p. 5-6. Cf. *Skanda Purāṇa* 5.2.8. 21-24: In place of the skull (*kapāla*) which the sages (of the Pine forest) throw out, millions of new skulls appear. Cf. O'Flaherty (1976), p. 316 who quotes the passage in full. Fever is often described as three-headed, cf. O'Flaherty (1976), p. 163, p. 231. Viśvarūpa, who is at least partially asuric, has three heads.

[3] O'Flaherty (1976), p. 284 (*Brahma Purāṇa* 113.1-22). The Calcutta edition, from which O'Flaherty cites, was unfortunately not available to me.

have been dried up in a minute. Then, out of pity for the world, Śiva held the head until he placed it in Benares.'[1] (Note, as relevant, the Vīrapāṇṭi *pūcāri*'s statement that the *kapparai* should not be placed on the ground while it is carried in procession).

The *kapparai*'s power, though inherently dangerous, can, when handled properly, be put to positive use. Because the *kapparai* is a powerful spirit, it can dominate and chase malevolent spirits (Mal., etc.). This positive aspect places it again among the gods. It is not surprising then, that the *kapparai* turns into the Trimūrti. In Aṅkāḷamman herself these two aspects (the malevolent and the benevolent) coincide, and in her *akōra rūpam* she is as much a *pēy* as is the *piramakapālam*. One informant made it very clear that Aṅkāḷamman and the *piramakapālam* are, in fact, the same: The skull of Brahmā (*piramakatti*) had gotten stuck onto the Amman's hand, after it had left Śiva. Food was spread on the ground, and it jumped down from the goddess' hand.

'At that moment Mahāviṣṇu pulled his sister inside the house and locked the door. The *piramakatti* started to cry: 'Cāmi, for twelve years I was with you, and now you have abandoned me!' Mahāviṣṇu replied: Oh *piramakatti*, you need not cry. In each of the four *yukam* there will be Rākṣasas whom I shall destroy and these you will be given as sacrifice (*pali*). In the *tirētāyukam* I will be Narasiṃha and I will kill Hiranyakaśipu, and this *pali* you can eat. In the *kirētāyukam* I will take the *avatāram* of Rāma and I shall kill Rāvana; in the *tuvāparayukam* I shall be Kṛṣṇa and I shall destroy Duryodhana's armies; all these sacrifices will be yours. In the *kaliyukam* Śakti in her sixteen forms will sit in the world, and people will offer her sacrifices of goats, pigs and chicken in order to be released from their problems, and you, *piramakatti*, will sit in the world and eat all these sacrifices, you will be the village deity (*nī kirāmatēvataiyāka iruntu...*) and protect the people.' When the *piramakatti* had received this boon, it, that *piramakatti*, came

[1] Cf. *Vāmana Purāṇa* 3.7: When Rudra, tormented or heated (*saṃpratāpita*) by brahminicide, goes to take a bath in the Yamunā, her waters get dried up.

to sit as Umā, as goddess (tēvataiyāka). So the *piramakatti* is Aṅkāḷamman̲, Māriyāttā, Kāṭṭēri, Kāḷi; all the *pali*-eating[1] goddesses are the *piramakatti*.' (Teli).

The *pūcāri* of Vālācāpāt made the same identification when he said: 'Aṅkāḷamman̲ takes the *avatāram* of Brahmā and goes to the cremation ground. The implied meaning is that Aṅkāḷamman̲, when she goes to the cremation ground, is possessed by (or is in fact) the same fury which had taken hold of Śiva, after he had cut off Brahmā's head. With the skull in her hand, the goddess 'became agitated and roamed the world as a spirit (*alakai*), she shouted that her burning hunger may be stilled, and in the cremation ground she quickly ate the bones of humans.'[2] For the moment the above description may suffice to show the *kapparai*'s dangerous and ambivalent nature, its intimate connection with spirits and due to its nature, its identification with the goddess.

The perception of Brahmā as a spirit (*pēy* or *bhūta*) is a phenomenon found in other parts of India as well (see below, B.1.) In connection with our remark that the *kapparai* resembles a mask, the Tuluva *bhūta* cult may be mentioned here briefly. According to Thurston,[3] the most important personage of this cult is Brahmeru to whom the other *bhūta* are subordinate. Peter J. Claus[4] discusses a Tulu deity called Bermeru or Nāga Bermeru who is 'placed among the *bhūtas*, or devils'. The dancers ('possession-priests' - Claus) of the Tuluva deities (*bhūta*) wear the masks of the respective deity while they perform.[5] Although the *kapparai* is not, as such, a mask which is ever worn, its resemblance to a mask is striking. The *kapparai* acts very much like the 'possession-priests' of the Tuluva deities: it dances (informants used the word 'āṭa', 'to dance', when they

[1] i.e., meat-eating goddesses.

[2] From a verse belonging to an apparently lost purāṇa about Aṅkāḷamman̲. The verse was quoted by the main informant of Rātāpuram.

[3] Thurston (1909 C&T), Vol. V, p. 141 ff. 'Nalke'.

[4] Claus (1978), p. 5.

[5] Thurston, *ibid.*, p. 145. Cf. Burnell (1897) IA 26, p. 69: A mask is prepared and given to Pañjurli. Cf. Devi (1962), p. 47, who says that in the Krishnanattam, a dance drama of Kerala on the life of Kṛsna (written in Sanskrit) and 'for three hundred years ...presented without any change in dramatic form or costumes'... 'masks are used to represent Brahma, and certain demon and monkey characters...'.

described how they carry the *kapparai*), and it exorcises spirits.

To the *kapparai* of the Cūḷai temple, which looks like an umbrella, we can compare the following:

> 'In an account of a ceremonial at the Pishāri temple near Quilandy in Malabar, Mr. F. Fawcett writes (1901): that 'early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pānān caste. He carries a small cadjan (palm leaf) umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. The umbrella should have a long handle, and with this in hand, he performs a dance before the temple...'[1]

The belief that Brahmā's cut off head is dangerous and of the nature of a harmful spirit seems to be current also among the Newar of Nepal: 'The Newar still believe today that, if someone dies at the time of the *dhaniṣṭha nakṣatra* (*śraviṣṭhā* or 24th lunar mansion - MW), others will die, analogously to the five heads of Brahmā, unless a figure of Brahmā with five heads is made and deposited in the 'chvasa'.' The corresponding myth is as follows: At the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī, Brahmā saw a foot of the goddess and was immediately filled with passion for her. Śiva, who noticed this, became angry and cut off Brahmā's fifth head. This happened during the *dhaniṣṭha nakṣatra*. Brahmā, who was now gravely injured, could no longer create. Śiva thereupon decided to do whatever possible to revive Brahmā. First of all, the Yoginīs brought all of Brahmā's clothes to the 'chvasa', a big paving-stone which is set into the ground, especially on cross-roads, and which functions as a depository for ritually impure things. This stone is also the abode of the chvasa-ajimā and of various demons'.[2]

A last note on the skull which laughs: When Pārvatī was not able to recognize Śiva, the skull laughed and fell from Śiva's hand (Mal-

[1] Thurston (1909 C&T), Vol. VI, 'Pānān', p. 31 ff: 'Pānāns are tailors among Tamils in Madura and Tinnevelly. The Malayālam Pānāns are described as 'exorcists and devil-dancers'. The men also make umbrellas, the women act as midwives.' The Pānāns correspond to the Nalkes and Pombadas in South Canara.

[2] Unbescheid (1980), p. 139-140. (My own translation from the German).

Thurston's version). The skull's laughter fits into what Bloomfield calls 'Hohngelächter';[1] it is a malicious sort of laughter which has its source in the joy of seeing someone else suffer. Obviously, laughing would prove fatal to the skull since presumably its only way of grasping something is with its teeth,[2] but apart from this, the laughing skull may be akin to the grinning demons and *gaṇa* of Śiva, and one is also, inevitably, reminded of the goddess' 'demonic' or 'shrill' laughter.[3]

5.2. The figure in the cremation ground

Presentational: The figure in the cremation ground is made of the ashes of a burned body (sometimes *vipūti* is added), mixed with earth, sand or clay; sometimes the earth of a termite hill (*purru maṇ*) is used, in some cases the figure is fashioned from cement and then becomes permanent. It is in most cases a female figure and it is made to look terrifying (i.e., with *caṭai*, bulging eyes, a tongue which sticks out etc.). Sometimes the figure is decorated like a female with saris and ornaments, or it may be bare (e.g., Tinti.). Surrounding the figure are, in most cases, cone-shaped sub-deities called *kāval* or *pillaiyār*. The number of these varies (e.g., in Pērūr there are five on each side and three each on the top and bottom of the figure; cf. Valpt., Anai.). No matter how many of the guards are actually placed, they represent a total of 108. String is tied around the guards. The string and the guards are often called Vallāḷa's fort (*kōṭṭai*), one of their function is to act as boundary markers.

Representational: The figure is given various names: wife of Vallāḷarājaṉ, Pārvatī, Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Rākkāyācci, Pēcci, Mayāṉavīraṉ, Vīrabhadra, etc., i.e., the figure is a pregnant woman, a goddess or a god of the *kāval* type.

[1] Bloomfield (1916), p. 69 ff. and (1924), p. 203 and p. 214.

[2] Cf. Dessigane (1964), p. 45; Kāñcip. (1910) p. 132 (v. 20) of *vituvaccēṉīcappaṭalam*: When Viṣṇu threw his cakra (*pōrāḷi*) the skull on Vīrabhadra's neck swallowed it. Making the skull laugh by means of a dance, Viśvasena retrieved the cakra.

[3] Kinsley (1975), p. 94 (citing *Agnipurāṇa*); van Kooij (1972), p. 125 (*Kālikāpurāṇa* 63.67-68).

Essential: In the case of the *kapparai* it was to some extent possible to determine its essential nature by way of informants' own ideas about it. When we now try to find the essence of the figure, we are somewhat at a loss, because informants have very little to say about it. When they call the figure Vallālarājan's wife (only two informants gave her a name: Niśāsinī - Mal., Teli), we can consult the myth to find out who she is and what her part is in the ritual; when we are told, however, that the figure is the goddess or Mayāṇavīraṉ, the question obviously arises: what is a goddess or a god doing in the place of Vallālarājaṉ's wife? We can divide the figure into four types, which we shall now examine: 1. a corpse, 2. a goddess, 3. a god, 4. a pregnant woman.

Type 1. In two temples the priest performs the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai* on a burning corpse.[1] In one of these temples (Mad.Gu.) the burning body is supposedly a Brahmin woman. The goddess, by eating the bones of the dead body, gains strength (power). In the other temple, it was not specified whose burning body has to be used for the ritual, and the reason why Aṅkālammaṉ eats the bone of a dead body was stated by that *pūcāri* as follows: 'When a person dies, it is important that the soul or spirit (*āttumā*) of the dead should not go around harming people. When the priest (i.e., Aṅkālamman) eats the bone, he captures the spirit and eats it; when it is inside of him, it cannot harm others. Some people say Aṅkāyi eats dead bodies, but that is wrong. It's not that Māri comes in form of smallpox or Kāli in form of cholera, they are goddesses who protect (from these diseases).'

The corpse is the food of the goddess, the food which, if offered to her, makes her protect the *pūcāri* and devotee and which, if withheld from her, will cause her to create problems for the *pūcāri* (Mad.Gu.). There may be some significance in the corpse being that of a Brahmin woman,[2] though this was not particularly stressed and even contradicted by the (Mad.Gu.) *pūcāri*'s son, who takes part in the ritual (according to him, it can be the body of anyone at all). The idea may be that the

[1] Mad.Gu. The *pūcāri* of the other temple did not want me to write about the cremation ground ceremony because, he said, people misunderstand it. I hope that in writing about it, I will help to dispell some of the misunderstanding and I hope that in not naming the temple, I do not completely break my promise to the *pūcāri*.

[2] One is tempted to think of the Brahmin woman as pregnant. Pregnant women are however not burned or if, the foetus has to be removed prior to it. (Personal communication by Dr. A. Dhamotharan, Heidelberg). See also below, C.2.

body should be of a person of higher (purer) caste. This tallies with Thurston's accounts in which the possessed people are said to eat the 'ashes of corpses' and 'partly burnt bones' (Mal., Valpettai). We have pointed out elsewhere that the majority of caste groups associated with Aṅkāḷamman bury their dead. The goddess, in fact, does not seem to have any preferences, she eats 'raw' bodies (*paccai piṇam*) and burned bodies (*cuṭṭa piṇam*). Notice that in this connection the *pūcāri* performs the ritual on the dead body with his right hand and goes around the body in a clockwise (*pradakṣiṇa*) direction and not the opposite (left hand, left direction), as is usual in funerary rites. In the other temple the corpse is not so much a source of food which satisfies the goddess' hunger as it is a source of evil (evil spirit) which the goddess removes by eating it. In the one case the goddess turns malevolent if she is not provided with the food, while in the other case it is the food (spirit) which turns malevolent if it is not eaten. In either case, however, the ritual eating of the bone is aimed at appeasing or subduing a malevolent force. The idea that eating the dead body (or part of it) will change the goddess' disposition is also expressed in Viluppuram: 'it appeases the goddess' anger'. A devotee of the Aṅkāḷamman of Cāttaṉūr insisted that the dead body, which will be in the cremation ground during the *mayāṉakkollai*, is the sacrifice. We shall have more to say about this later.

Type 2. When the figure is a goddess, it is a goddess of the *kāla* type. This fear-inspiring figure is considered to be very powerful (she lies because if she were standing up, she would burn the whole universe with her eyes - Iraci.). In Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, close to one of the outer temple walls, there is the lying figure of Periyāyi. One of the *pūcāri* associated Periyāyi with Satī who immolated herself during Dakṣa's sacrifice. Periyāyi is extremely terrifying: *'kōrappal ciṅkappal ceñcaṭai civaṉ kaṇṭāḷ, añciruvāṉ'* (with the poisonous fang, with the projecting tooth, with the red matted hair, if Śiva saw you thus, he would be afraid). The gods asked the goddess to get up and not to show her *vicuvarūpam* while lying down - it would be too frightening (Mal. (1)). The *pūcāri* of Vālācāpāṭ called the figure 'Pārvatī', 'the goddess who eats dead bodies (*paccai piṇam*)'. At the same time, he would often, when he described the procedure of the *mayāṉakkollai*, call the figure interchangeably *piṇam*

(dead body) or Amman. The Veṅkampūr *pūcāri* called the lying figure Puṅkāvanam, the *avatāram* of Aṅkāḷamman, the *avatāram* who eats dead bodies, who is overcome with madness (*pittu*) in the cremation ground, who eats the brain and head, the one who carries margosa leaves (*vēpp-ilai*)[1], who is very old and fierce.[2] The old age and the fierceness or pride of the goddess remind us of the fortune-teller in the Vallāla-rājan myth. One version of this myth has the fortune-teller (Aṅkāḷamman) living in the cremation ground and sleeping on a bier (Mutta.). Another informant equated the figure in the cremation ground with the dead bodies. He explained that the *mayānakkollai* is an enactment of the goddess' destruction of Daksa's *yākam*. Aṅkāḷamman, as Bhadrakālī, goes to the *yākam* together with her armies of *pēy*, *picācu* and *pūtam* (spirits and demons) and these armies are hungry and eat the dead bodies. That is why a figure is made in the cremation ground, the figure is like a corpse. The women who go there, to the figure, will get possessed by the spirits (*pēy*, *picācu*) and they will rip apart the figure and eat it. Aṅkāḷamman herself does not eat dead bodies, only her armies of spirits do.[3] We see here how the dead body turns into a figure and how the figure, in turn, is identified with the goddess in her *kāla* form because of its location and its association with spirits who eat dead bodies. If the basic idea behind the figure is that of a dead body, it also makes sense to change the figure into a male cremation ground deity.

Type 3. Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi or Mācāṇakkaruppan, as the name suggests, is the black god of the cremation ground. The figure made in Vālāntūr is called Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi (despite it being a female figure). The identification of this god with the figure may be due to the fact that the location of the figure is in the place where Mācāṇakkaruppan lives. The figure lies under an *iluppai* tree (cf. above). The following story makes the connection between the tree and the god and also shows the god's influence over pregnancy, a power which is Aṅkāḷamman's as well: Women used to come to pick the seeds from the *iluppai* tree to make oil. It happened once that a menstruating woman came there. Some kind of power took hold of her (a disease), and she died. This also happened to pregnant women who either lost their child or died. So it went on for many years and many women died. Finally, the villagers went to consult a *kōṭaṅki*

[1] See below.

[2] *aṅkāram* = *akaṅkāram* 'Fierceness, haughtiness, pride'.

[3] (Mdr.Cinta., informant (2)). The informant made a reference to the *Kaliṅkattup paraṇi*, to Kāḷi who is surrounded by hungry *pēy*, *picācu*. Note that the figure for the ritual is made in the temple.

(a diviner, soothsayer). Mācaṇakkaruppaṉ made known to the villagers through the *kōṭaṅki* that it had been he (the god) who had caused the women's disease and that from now on he would prevent the tree from having seeds and cause it to bear flowers only. Women should not come to the tree any longer.[1]

We shall see below, that menstruating and pregnant women are especially susceptible to the influence of malevolent spirits. In the above case, the women unwittingly defiled the sacred area of the god, and the god's reaction was not any different from that of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, as expressed in the Vallāḷarājaṉ myth. The figure below the *iluppai* tree now takes on a different meaning: she is the pregnant woman offered to Mācaṇakkaruppaṉ.

The figure, in its function as the sacrifice, also makes its interpretation as Vallāḷarājaṉ possible. In some versions of myth 3, the proud 'demon' king becomes, like Dakṣa, the sacrificial victim. Parallel to the Dakṣa myth, Vīrabhadra cuts off Vallāḷarājaṉ's head. The myth does not tell us that the head is replaced, however, on the ritual level, the figure's head is treated, in two instance, like the head of a sacrifice (Kunna., Mutta.).

Type 4. The last interpretation given to the figure is that of the wife of Vallāḷarājaṉ, the pregnant queen. This explanation is self-evident since it superimposes the myth onto the ritual, the figure in the ritual corresponding to the figure in the myth. Although the Vallāḷarājaṉ myth is well known, this correspondence is very rare; in many instances the figure will be a goddess, irrespective of what the myth says. The most intriguing point is, of course, how the pregnant queen can turn into a goddess, or, we may ask the question: can the goddess be a pregnant queen? Informants certainly did not equate the pregnant woman with the goddess. We shall come back to this point.

The *kāval*

Surrounding the figure are guardian deities (*kāval*).[2] These cone-shaped figures, that look like *liṅkam* (Per.), are also called *kōṭṭai* (Orrai.) or Vallāḷa *kōṭṭai* (forts) (Per.), the reason being that the guards and the

[1] Cf. Babb (1975), p. 130, who relates that pregnant women should not go near a smallpox patient, because they 'are believed to incite the goddess' [Shitla's] anger.'

[2] Sometimes they are absent (Tinti.).

string tied around them represent the ramparts of a fort in the middle of which the goddess lies (Orrai., Anai.). The guards are sometimes called the goddess' children (*kuḻantai* - Culur, Pal.) or *piḷḷaiyār* (Avan., Valpettai: here also *kōṭṭai, āvuṭaiyār*). The *kāval* are trated like deities during the ritual, they are decorated with flowers (Per.) and share the offerings given to the goddess (Valpettai, Anai., Kovai, Pal.). The function of the *kāval* deities and the reason for their being placed around the figure is fairly clear. They are the *dvārapālaka*, the door-keepers of the shrine. That the door-keepers of the goddess are her children is a widespread theme in Hinduism.[1] The gods in front of Aṅkāḷammaṉ shrines are called her *kāval* and her children, and in the myths the goddess creates children who become her guards. The association of the guardian stones with the *liṅga* (*āvuṭaiyār*) may be due to their shape, however, Śiva, as Bhairava, is often one of Aṅkāḷammaṉ's *parivāra* deities (cf. iconography). That the goddess' lover, Śiva, becomes her guardian, we know from other sources.[2] The guards not only protect the deity, they also form a boundary or wall around the power of the goddess (Anai.) The guards' function may be similar to the function of the walls of a shrine. According to Shulman,[3] the walls contain the ordered and sacred. The goddess' power has to be contained because it is dangerous, and it has to be contained and controlled in order to be effectively used.

The goddess' habitation is compared to the strong fort of Vallāḷarājaṉ. His fort is so high that not even an ant or a snake can climb inside it (Orrai.). Powerful guards (*arakkar*) are posted at the fort's gates (Kuppucci.).[4] The goddess sits in the middle of either a single fort or of seven forts (Trichi distr.), and she is protected by Asuras (Anai.). In the

[1] We think of Gaṇeśa who loses his head in the performance of his duty. Gaṇeśa and Skanda (Murukaṉ), another son of Pārvatī, are frequently found at the entrance of shrines in Tamilnadu.

[2] Cf. Beck (1981) (Puruṣārtha 5): Māriyammaṉ's lover, in the form of a tree-trunk which, after the wedding, is replaced by a stone, becomes her guardian. Cf. Babb (1975), p. 223-225. Śiva (as 'Bhairav') is the guardian (or 'body-guard') of the goddess Mahāmāyā in Raipur. Poṭṭu rāju ('buffalo king') in Andhra and Potrāj in Maharashtra holds a similar position. See Whitehead (1976), p. 40; Vetschera (1976), p. 460 ff.: Potrāj in Maharashtra is represented by a member of the Māng or Mahār community; in a ceremony called *baḍhaṇ*, he is 'married' to the goddess Marīāī or Lakṣmīāī.

[3] Shulman (1980), p. 75.

[4] These guards are the raw material of the *pampai* drum (see ch. I, introduction).

legend of Ammavaru,[1] the goddess enclosed her city 'with walls of bronze, brass, and gold; posted at the gates several thousand spirits of various sorts..'.[2] The goddess is very much like a king, her armies are the spirits (*pēy, picācu*) who surround her and who guard her.

Pillaiyār (Gaṇeśa) unites within himself both aspects of the goddess' guardians, that of the demon (he is called leader of 'spirits': Gaṇapati)[3] and that of the child. (It is Vinayāka whom the goddess sends as guard to the cremation ground - myth 12, Mal.). The goddess, in the company of her 108 children, conveys the opposite idea of her surroundings, the cremation ground, which is seemingly a land of barrenness. Fertility and barrenness are the themes of the *pillaippāvu*.

5.3. *Pillaippāvu*

Presentational: The goddess of the *pillaippāvu* (Aṅkāḷamman, Pēcci, Kāttēri, Kāḷi) is garlanded with intestines, biting intestines with her teeth, and carrying in her hands a winnowing fan in which lies a small figure of a child (made of rice flour paste). Sometimes the intestines are dispensed with, and the goddess only carries the winnowing fan (Salem).

Representational: It is the goddess who pulled out both the intestines and the child from Vallāḷarāṇi's stomach.

Essential: Two wishes are addressed to the goddess of the *pillaippāvu* by the devotee: the wish for the birth of a child and the wish that the goddess may protect the child. The figure (*pāvai, pāvu*) in the winnowing fan represents a newly born child (myth 3) or a foetus (*karu* - Virap.; cf. also Per. and Kuppucci., where the actual foetus, that of a goat, is used). Women who wish to get pregnant pour milk over the figure and then drink the milk (Teli, Virap., etc.). The women will offer money (*pālkācu* - 'milk-money') to the goddess. Pēcci, in particular, is the goddess who reigns over childbirth. When a child is born, the mother will come with the child

[1] Whitehead (1976), p. 128.

[2] Cf. Chapter 6, *Maṇimēkalai* (1976), p. 78 ff., esp. lines 38 ff., where Kāṭamar celvi's *kōṭṭam* (place, temple) is described as being in the cremation ground, surrounded by four large gates and guarded by a huge demon of mortar. (I am grateful to Mrs. Paula Richman for this reference). Cf. *Kaliṅkattup paraṇi* (1975), p. 48, No. 104 where Kāḷi or Aṇaṅku's temple is described as having a *kōpuram* and walls made of white bones and being guarded by a fire-mouth spirit (*kollivāyp pēy*).

[3] Arbman (1922), p. 218-219 says that Gaṇeśa was originally a demon god and the Vināyakas illness-causing demons, 'menschenfeindliche Krankheits-dämonen'.

to the temple and offer 15 paisā or more to Pēcci (Tri-U.). Pēcci will protect the child until it reaches puberty. She will especially protect it from the attacks of malevolent spirits. There is a saying: *'Pēcci piḷḷaiyai pēy aṭikkātu'* (the *pēy* will not attack children of Pēcci) (Tri-P.). The goddess who protects children is also the one who harms them. Some people at the Melaṭṭūr temple said that Pēcci and Kāṭṭēri were the goddesses to be feared. They cause fever in children below twelve years, and they choke them; they harm pregnant women, and if a pregnant woman sees these goddesses, she will abort. Sometimes a chicken or a goat will be offered to Pēcci, when a child has fever. Money offered to Pēcci, with the prayer for a child, is also called Kāṭṭēri *kācu* (Kāṭṭēri money - Tri.U.). Dressed up as Pēcci one should have an awe-inspiring appearance (Muc.). Devotees whom I saw approaching Pēcci during the *piḷḷaippāvu* ritual in Trichi (Tri-P.) looked frightened. The *pūcāri* was dressed in a black sari, he wore a wig with long hair, in his mouth were the liver and intestines (they were of plastic) reaching to the winnowing fan which he carried and which contained, apart from the small figure made of flour, margosa leaves and jasmin flowers. During the procession around the streets at midnight, devotees poured water over Pēcci's feet. They offered coins. Many couples brought their young child to be blessed. Without exception these devotees looked scared and very serious, some of them trembled. No milk was used for the ritual, only *vipūti* was handed to the devotees. Pēcci was accompanied by two men playing the *pampai* and one playing the *uṭukkai* drum. After the procession had reached the river, all the intestines and the liver were put into the winnowing fan, and then blood, from a chicken which was sacrificed, was sprinkled over the winnowing fan, and a small *pūcai* was performed. The winnowing fan with its content was laid into the current of the river. *Piracātam* was then distributed to all those who had accompanied Pēcci (there had been about 20 people of which three were old women; no young women or children were of the party). In some places the winnowing fan is brought to the cremation ground and left there (Omal.), or it is buried in the temple (Iraci.).[1] In the ritual Beck describes, a goat liver is put into the winnowing fan (see above, Coimbatore distr.). The liver may be a substitute for the foetus or it may itself be considered an effective agent in rituals to do with child birth. In Urappuli the

[1]The basic idea behind throwing the winnowing fan into the water or leaving it behind seems to be that objects made temporarily for a religious ceremony should not be reused (cf. *kapparai*, figure in cremation ground and more generally, deities which are made of clay for a particular ceremony: they are usually thrown into the river at the end.) Cf. Van Gennep (1960), p. 60.

liver is extracted from a pregnant goat, roasted over the fire and offered to pregnant women and children (this ritual is called *pārivēttai* here). Sometimes the winnowing fan contains blood rice which is thrown up into the air (Vilu., Orrai.). Here, as for the *kapparai*, the blood rice is meant for the spirits who may trouble those performing the ritual. 'When the *pūcāri* carries the winnowing fan, spirits from different directions will come and pull at him' (Amur). Not only Pēcci, but also other goddesses and gods are prayed to for children and the protection of children: Aṅkāḷamman, Rākkāyi, Kāṭṭēri; Iruḷappan (Ura.). For these deities cradles are offered by devotees. Caṅkilikkaruppan of Periyakuḷam also receives the *kāṇikkai* from those to whom a child has been born (if this is omitted, the child will cry or the mother will not have enough milk). Cherroots, betel leaves, and incense are other offerings to this god, who will also assure that the cows will give plenty of milk.

On the ritual performance level, the intestine-garlanded goddess has two different functions: in the first case, she carries the winnowing fan containing the child and/or she interacts with the devotees through a ritual act, the *pillaippāvu*, which is believed to be effect-producing (i.e., the fulfilment of a child-wish, the protection of a child, etc.), while in the second case, her role remains peripheral to the main ritual and there is no effect-producing interaction between her and her devotees, that is, she takes part in the ritual as a devotee's fulfilment of a vow. In the latter case, her connection to the idea of the *pillaippāvu* may be quite loose or even absent, e.g., the Tiṇṭivaṉam Aṅkāḷamman *vēṣam* was in fulfilment of a vow, and no interaction between the person dressed up and women wishing children etc. took place; or, e.g., the Kāḷi *vēṣam* of Vālācāpāt: according to the *pūcāri*, the person who personifies Kāḷi is garlanded with intestines and carries the liver in his mouth 'because Kāḷi sits on dead bodies and eats livers and intestines'; here the focal point of the *pillaippāvu*, namely the child, is absent. In Viluppuram, however, Kāḷi and the goddess who removes the child from the queen's womb are combined.

So far we have tried to get a clearer idea of what the elements in the ritual mean. Before we discuss the meaning of the core rituals, it may be useful to look at the myths and extract from them what may further help to elucidate the essence of the elements analyzed above.

B. Myths 3 and 12

1. Myth 12: Śiva's brahminicide

This myth was known in South India at least by the seventh century A.D. The Pallava king Mahendravarman (or Mahendravikrama-Varman, ca. A.D. 600-630), who ruled at Kāñcīpuram, wrote the *Matta-vilāsa*, a farce about a kapālin ascetic who lives in Ekambam (Ekāmbaranātha temple).[1] In the farce, the Kapālin makes a reference to Śiva who was freed from the guilt of having cut off Brahmā's head.[2] The alms-bowl which the Kapālin uses is a skull, and it is compared to the skull of Brahmā (the lotus-throned god).[3] In the *Tiruvilaiyātal purāṇam* (ca. 12th century)[4] Śiva comes to the *tāruvaṉam*[5] (*dārukā-vana*) holding the skull (*kapālam*) in his hand. In the *Kāñcippurāṇam* (latter part of 18th century) Śiva, as Bhairava, (Vayiravar) pulls out one of Brahmā's five heads. Viṣnu cuts his forehead and lets his blood flow into the skull which Bhairava holds. Bhairava finally installs a *liṅkam*, calls it Bhairava and tells it to be the guardian of Kāñcī and to distribute the blood from the skull to all his *gaṇa*.[6] In the *Kāñcippurāṇam* it is Brahmā's pride which leads Śiva to pluck one of Brahmā's five heads.[7] In most of the oral versions of this myth, told in connection with Aṅkāḷamman, it is the fact that both Śiva and Brahmā have five heads - this makes it impossible for

[1] Barnett (1930) BSOS, p. 697-717. Cf. Lorenzen (1972), p. 23, where he mentions also other sources which indicate the presence of Kāpālikas in South India around that time.

[2] Barnett (1930), p. 713.

[3] *ibid.*, p. 712-713.

[4] Dessigane (1960), p. ii (for dating of the earliest of the three (by Perumparrappuliyūr Nampi). The more popular one is from the 16th century by Parañcōtimuṉivar. Śiva in the *tāruvaṉam*: p. 49; Tiruvil. *vacaṉam* (1961), p. 169 (*vaḷaiyal virral*).

[5] For Śiva as Kapālin in the *tāruvaṉam*, cf. Kulke (1970), p. 11, 12, 38, 60, 64, 65.

[6] Dessigane (1964), p. 43-44; Kāñcip. (1910), p. 126 ff., *vayiravīcappaṭalam*, 18-19; 30; 35-38. For a discussion on Bhairava see v. Stietencron (1969). Cf. O'Flaherty (1981-Śiva), p. 123 ff. on the beheading of Brahmā by Śiva.

[7] Dessigane (1964), p. 43; Kāñcip. (1910), p. 128, v. 17, 18.

Pārvatī (Īśvarī) to distinguish one from the other - which causes Śiva to commit brahminicide (Tinti., Tiruva., Avalur., Teli, Mdr.Culai, Valpettai).[1] The Rātāpuram version explains how Brahmā acquires his fifth head:

'Śiva was in the *nantaṉavaṉam* (a flower garden, garden of Indra). All the gods, including Brahmā, came to visit him. Śiva said to Brahmā: 'You are equal to me, why don't you sit down?' Brahmā replied: 'This is not so, only if you give me five faces, like you have, will I sit down.' Śiva fulfilled his wish, and Brahmā became proud. He called all the gods and told them that *he* would grant them boons, that they didn't need to go to Śiva, and he abused Śiva. When Īśvarī arrived, she could not distinguish between the two gods. Visnu was asked for advice, and he told Śiva to cut off Brahmā's middle head.' (In the other versions it is the goddess who commands Śiva to cut off the head).

The Cūḷai version makes Brahmā's love for Pārvatī the cause. It further links the goddess' anger with her necrophagia and it ends, rather beautifully, in the fulfilment of the goddess' wish, the *true* wedding with Śiva, which can only take place after the 'evil' has been conquered:

'It is customary for Hindu women to worship the feet of their husbands. Whenever Śiva would come home, Pārvatī would wash his feet and apply turmeric and *kuṅkumam*. She would do this without looking up - she would only look up after finishing the ceremony. After seeing Pārvatī with Śiva, Brahmā fell in love with her. One day, before Śiva's return, Brahmā visited Pārvatī. Pārvatī, thinking him to be her husband, worshipped and washed the feet of Brahmā. She only noticed who he was, when she looked up. Brahmā, afraid Pārvatī would curse him, left. When Śiva came home, Pārvatī did not wash his feet. Śiva, by means of his mental powers, realized what had happened and wanted to take revenge. Śiva chased Brahmā, and Brahmā, finally not any longer able to run, tried to hide himself by putting his heads into the hole of a tree. Śiva pulled on one ear of one of Brahmā's heads, and the head came off and got stuck to Śiva's right hand. Now, whatever Śiva wanted to eat or drink got eaten or drunk by the head on Śiva's hand. Śiva thus became very weak and lean. Pārvatī in vain tried everything to get rid of

[1] Cf. O'Flaherty (1981-Śiva), p. 127.

this curse. Finally Pārvatī got so angry and wild because of the curse on Śiva that she wanted to eat dead human bodies and put their intestines as a garland around her neck. She went to the burial ground, where Śiva followed her. Pārvatī danced wildly. Then she put some cucumber, peas (*cuntal*), and *koḷukkaṭṭai* on the burial ground, and while the head on Śiva's hand ate these things, Pārvatī embraced Śiva. At that moment Śiva and Pārvatī united into Ardhanārīśvara, and the head fell off Śiva's hand. The curse was lifted, and Pārvatī was very happy.'(inf. (1)).

The oral versions further adopt the myth more or less successfully to the ritual (Valpettai, Mal.). The Tiṇṭivaṉam version makes Viṣṇu tell Aṅkāḷammaṉ to offer such things as *koḷukkaṭṭai*, *cuṇṭal* and coconuts to Mayāṉavīraṉ in the month of Māci, at night. The skull leaves Śiva's hand to eat these. Śiva then becomes *tāṇṭavarāyaṉ-cāmi* (Lord of the dance).[1] Most of the versions transfer the skull, after it has left Śiva, onto the goddess, and she in turn gets possessed with madness, i.e., brahminicide enters her, as it had entered Śiva before[2] (Rat., Avalur., Tiruva., Valpettai). The skull is tricked off her hand with food (Teli, Mdr.Culai), or she tramples it (Tiruva.). The place where this happens is the cremation ground in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr. Some villages will make their Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple the place where the goddess is finally released from her madness: she came to a *kuḷam* (tank, pond) in Teli; she cooled down in Citamparam.

Throughout the Aṅkāḷammaṉ myths the goddess' *tavam* is a means to force Śiva's attention on her. Just as Daksa's daughter through her *tavam* obtains Śiva as a husband and after the wedding again causes him to appear by means of *tavam*,[3] so does Aṅkāḷammaṉ employ her ascetic powers to the same effect. When Śiva roams the world as Kapālin, Aṅkāḷammaṉ's austerities lead him to where she is sitting: the cremation ground of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr. In the Teli version of the brahminicide myth we encounter the well-known motif of the sand *liṅkam*: Viṣṇu tells Ammaṉ to

[1] Cf. Kulke (1970) who discusses at length Śiva's dance, especially at p. 107, Śiva who dances as Bhairava; p. 109: Śiva dances smeared with the ashes from the cremation ground; cf. also p. 115, 116.

[2] Cf. *Vāmana Purāṇa* 3.5.: Brahminicide (*brahmahatyā*) entered (*viveśa*) Rudra, who became excessively heated.

[3] Dessigane (1967), Chapter on Takkaṉ, No. 7 and 8, p. 182 and 184.

go to the Kampai river, make an *āvuṭaiyār* of sand, do *tavam* and worship Śiva. Her meditation on Śiva will cause him to end his twelve years of sleepless and foodless wandering through the world at the place of this *liṅkam*. Then she can spread the food on the ground which the greedy skull will eat and thus release Śiva.[1]

In the oral versions of the myth three strands are interwoven. We recognize first of all the well-known pan-Hindu motif: Śiva as Kapālin or Brahmaśiraśchedakamūrti.[2] The second strand, which we might call supra-local, is the introduction of the goddess, A: as Pārvatī who becomes the prompting agent for Śiva's brahminicide (she mistakes Brahmā for Śiva)[3] -this theme, the goddess' confusion over the five heads of both gods, is not restricted to Tamilnadu: we find it in a version Oppert[4] cites, which comes from the region of South Canara- and B: as Aṅkāḷammaṉ who becomes the instrument in Śiva's release from the skull. At the same time, great stress is placed on the *piramakapālam*; it eclipses Śiva's role in the myth. The third strand is the local, place-oriented variation of the myth, the attempt to bring the myth into correlation with the ritual in a particular village (Valpettai, Tinti., Teli). In other words, we can say that a myth focussing on Śiva was adopted by the followers of a goddess cult and then transformed in such a way as to shift the attention from Śiva to the goddess and therewith to the ritual action. The question that poses itself is: why was this myth introduced at all? We have seen that another myth, that of Vallāḷarājaṉ, is much more wide-spread. It is a myth which

[1] This example illustrates well how a local cult not only adopts a pan-Hindu myth but links it, at the same time, with a famous Tamil shrine (Kāñcīpuram), thus placing the local cult within two planes of reference.

[2] Cf. v. Stietencron (1969) and also Kramrisch (1981), p. 250 ff. (on Bhairava).

[3] The rivalry between Śiva and Brahmā is underplayed in the oral versions (except Rat., Mdr.Culai); Brahmā's lustful behaviour (cf. Kramrisch) turns up also, though thinly veiled, in the Teli version: Brahmā fell in love with one of the heavenly dancing girls. He tried to embrace her, but she vanished. In his search for her, Brahmā came to a street on Kailankiri. Umā, seeing the five-headed person and mistaking him for her husband, went up to Brahmā to give him her respects. When she stood in front of him, Brahmā looked at her, and then the goddess felt shame (*nāṇam*). Cf. Whitehead (1976) p. 132: Brahmā seeing the shadow of Pārvatī's foot is filled with 'unholy desires' for her.

[4] Oppert (1893), p. 299, citing Rev. M. Schaible from Karkal.

centres around the goddess, in which Śiva has (in some versions) no part at all or in which (in other versions) he is portrayed as the goddess' antagonist (see below). This myth is, furthermore, not absent in the areas in which we are told the myth of Śiva's brahminicide, it co-exists, but is, especially in Mēl Malaiyanūr, underplayed. In the songs and in the play about Aṅkālamman (see chapter V), which refer in particular to Aṅkālamman in Mēl Malaiyanūr, the brahminicide myth predominates. The *pūcāri* of Mēl Malaiyanūr himself stressed the importance of the *kapparai*, the heads of Brahmā. This, together with the fact that the brahminicide myth is very popular around Mēl Malaiyanūr and in areas where we are likely to find Cempaṭavar communities, points to the Cempaṭavar of Mēl Malaiyanūr as the most likely adopters of the myth into their cult. The Cempaṭavar say that Śiva is their son-in-law. A section of the Cempaṭavar wear the *liṅkam*. The Cempaṭavar hold certain hereditary rights in the Tiruvannāmalai and Citamparam temples, especially the right to light the *kārttikai tīpam* on Arunācala mountain; that is, with regard to the fishermen's tasks in these big śaiva temples, it would have been in their own interest, or even a necessity, to link their indigenous cult with that of Śiva. The problem is, however, that we do not know what their indigenous cult was. What we can presume with reasonable certainty is that the *kapparai* must have been an element of the 'original' ritual complex and that it must have been the decisive factor in the choice of the myth when it was found necessary to build a bridge between the goddess and Śiva. The nature of the *kapparai* itself is highly ambiguous, as we have seen, and the value assigned it by the Cempaṭavar is not consistent throughout (in Viluppuram the *kapparai* is Aṅkālamman). Yet, there must have been a good reason to call the *kapparai* 'heads of Brahmā'. There are at least two possibilities which could account for the association of Brahmā with the *kapparai*: 1. an earlier spirit or *bhūta* cult involving a deity with a name similar to Brahmā, i.e., Brahma, Bermeru etc., or 2. a spirit or *bhūta* cult surrounding a female deity and a later reinterpretation of the deity in the light of the myth.

Regarding possibility 1, we have already referred to the Tuluva *bhūta* cult. Brahma or Bermeru may have been worshipped by Tuluva rulers as early as the second century A.D.[1] This Brahma is closely associated with

[1] Claus (1978), p. 5.

serpents: 'Representations of Nāga-Brahma show him with the lower portion of his body as that of a serpent, while the upper half is that of a man carrying either a sword or a royal staff.'[1] Very much like Aṅkāḷamman who is the serpent (in the termite hill), who can be a malevolent spirit and who rules over fertility, this Tuluva Bermeru is a spirit, a lord 'over dangerous animals and fierce spirits,' and is associated with or is a snake.[2] Another Brahma-spirit deity of similar character is worshipped by the Vārlis:[3] Bharamdev is 'a tribal leader's spirit, a cattle god, a tribal hunter and a war god at the same time..... if not properly propitiated [he] causes untold evil as well as a serious mental disorder (*bharam*). He lives near the roots of a Savar tree on the village boundary. ...The central Bharamdev cult is always accompanied by another minor cult of the spirit (*Ran bhūt*), the former's companion and servant. A number of minor spirits, represented by stones coated with red lead and covered with wheel-made pots accompany the two deities. The minor shrines are marked with white or red flags tied on to tall bamboo posts.'[4] Bharamdev is also a fertility god.[5] During the festival, the medium will be possessed by the god. He will offer 'either a fowl or a goat and a clay horse. Blood sacrifice pleases the spirit, which immediately leaves the medium and enters the clay shrine, where it lives peacefully for a year, if regularly worshipped with food offerings.'[6] A Brahma deity, who causes madness, is also known to the Gonds. 'The Gonds believe that Brahmā Dev resides in a fig-tree. For them it is a very uncommon spirit: 'Sometimes

[1] Claus (1978), p. 6-7; see also p. 5, bottom.

[2] *ibid.* p. 7

[3] They are an 'aboriginal tribe found all over the Western hills' (along the West coast of Maharashtra and Gujarāt). All information about the Vārlis and their god(s) is taken from: Sisodia and Malhotra (1963), p. 69 ff. (I am indebted to Prof. G. Sontheimer for this and the following references on Brahma.

[4] Sisodia and Malhotra (1963), p. 70-71.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 71

[6] *ibid.*, p. 72. See also Settar (1971)('The Brahmadeva pillars - an inquiry into the origin and nature of the Brahmadeva worship among the Digambara Jains'). Settar's view is that the Jains adopted the tribal Brahmadeva when they came in contact with the tribal peoples of the West coast, notably the Vārlis. The Brahmadeva of the Jains kept much of his tribal character, but his main role seems to have been that of a guardian. He is often shown sitting on a horse.

he leaps on a man passing beneath his tree, and then for the period of his possession that man goes crazy in his wits'.'[1] In Maharashtra, the spirit of a Brahmin is worshipped by women who desire a son.[2] The function of a guardian deity is attributed to Brahmā in the *Līḷācaritra*: a deity which Cakradhara calls Brahmanāth is described as 'a village guardian, hovering at the village gate, red-eyed and of tremendous size, with an iron club on his shoulder.'[3]

In the light of the above, it would take little imagination to see one of these Brahma deities in the *kapparai*. The multiple heads on the *kapparai* could easily represent the 'heads' of the serpent and the (serpent-) spirit could in fact be that of a Brahmin. There is a version of the myth of Śiva's brahminicide which involves Nāga-Brahma (Berme). In it the head is not linked to a goddess, but rather the head is told by Śiva to go to earth, unite with the serpent (Nāga) and there to torture people in order to secure its existence.[4] It is, however, unlikely that such a Brahma-cult existed among the Cempatavar themselves, though we cannot exclude influences of such cults in the formation process of the *kapparai*'s nature. What speaks against the existence of an earlier Brahma-cult is the fact that, apart from the *kapparai*, Brahmā is totally absent: there are no *mūrtti*-s anywhere of him, he is not worshipped in any form,[5] and, except

[1] Shamrao Hivale & Verrier Elwin, 'Songs of the Forest', footnote 22 in: Sontheimer, G. 'The *vana* and the *kṣetra*: The tribal background of some famous cults'. In press. Cf. Murty and Sontheimer (1980), p. 169: a Brahmarākṣasī (a demoness) is held as a guardian in a tree by Śiva. Sontheimer (fn. 5) derives the name Brahmā from *bhram* 'to wander around' (Sanskrit, Kannaḍa, Marathi). The male counterpart to the Brahmarākṣasī is the Brahmarākṣasa ('the evil spirit of a dead Brahman' Oppert (1893) p. 298.)

[2] Sontheimer, 'The *vana* and the *kṣetra*', fn. 22: 'In Maharashtra a young Brahman who dies before the ungirding of the *munja* thread and the investiture of the sacred thread becomes a spirit in the Munjyā tree (a name of the Pipal tree) and is called Munjābā. The trunk of the tree may be enwrapped with white threads by women and worshipped for a son.' According to Molesworth ('Marathi and English Dictionary') this spirit is 'viewed as a fiend or goblin' (cf. *munjyā*).

[3] Līḷā 305. (Translation: Sontheimer).

[4] Oppert (1893), p. 303, fn. 20. Cf. p. 299, fn. 17 for almost the same version of the myth. Note that this Brahma deity is a mixture of the tribal (Tuluva) Brahma *bhūta* and the 'brahminical' Brahmā and is worshipped by Brahmins as well. The god is especially also made responsible for barrenness (fn. 17).

[5] The Tuluva Brahma has temples (cf. Oppert, p. 300, fn. 17 and Claus, p. 6). The Bharamdev of the Vārlis lives in small bell-shaped terra-cotta houses (Sisodia and Malhotra, p. 70).

in the brahminicide myth, he is not mentioned anywhere. The second possibility, that the *kapparai* represented right from its origin a female spirit or deity, is a more likely one. The serpent, first of all, can as much be a female as a male and secondly, the heads of the *kapparai*, if they originally represented the heads of the serpent (myth 1: with the goddess were born... the five faces), could have been associated with a female spirit. That brahminicide, the fury which follows the killer of a Brahmin, is personified as a female we know from the Mahābhārata: 'Out of the body of Vṛtra [who was slain by Śakra, i.e., Indra] the Fury of Brahminicide came forth; she was terrifying and hideous, striking fear into people, for she had enormous, sharp teeth and was frightfully deformed. She was dark and tawny; her hair was dishevelled and her eyes were gruesome. She wore a garland of skulls and she was emaciated, smeared with blood, clothed in rag garments.'[1]

What is significant here is that one and the same spirit or deity, brahminicide, is in one instance female, in the other, male. If we now suppose that the *kapparai* was from its outset a female deity, a spirit of a Brahmin who died an unnatural or pre-mature death or a spirit equally powerful to the brahminicide, we could not only account for the fact that the *kapparai* is very often thought of as female or even equated with the goddess, but we would also have an explanation as to why the goddess who takes the skull from Śiva was introduced into the myth. The similarities between the nature of Aṅkāḷamman and the *piramakapālam* or brahminicide (and the Brahma deities discussed above) would make it very easy to substitute one for the other: both the goddess and Brahmā spirits are connected with fertility - Śiva told the skull of Brahmā, after it had broken into five pieces that 'it might take hold of pregnant women, women during confinement, and babies, and that this would enable it to obtain worship and offerings'[2] -; furthermore, both the goddess and Brahmā spirits cause and remove various diseases, especially of a mental order or those induced through magic; both are leaders among spirits. This does not mean that they are exclusively interchangeable, other

[1] Mbh. 12.273.10-12; O'Flaherty's translation, in: O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 87. Cf. O'Flaherty (1981-Siva), p. 124, citing *Śiva Purāṇa* (3.8.36-66; 3.9.1-57)...'Śiva created a maiden named Brahminicide..'. Cf. *Kūrma Purāṇa* II.31.67: The maiden (*kanyā*), known as brahminicide (*brahmahatyā*) is described as having large terrible teeth (or fangs) and being decorated with a garland of flames.

[2] Whitehead (1976), p. 133, in the story of Ammavaru or Aṅkamma, the episode of Śiva's brahminicide.

deities could equally well fit the bill, but the similarities do put them on an equal footing, they are characteristics which circumscribe these deities' territory and the deities' particular functions.

On cannot say just when the myth of Śiva's brahminicide became attached to the cult of Aṅkāḷamman. The widespread use of the *kapparai* in the ritual and the limited equation of the *kapparai* with Brahmā leads one to guess that this myth was introduced at a relatively late stage in the history of the cult. Furthermore, this myth's prevalence in the songs and the play, all of which tend to push the goddess into the realm of the pan-Hindu deities, give the myth an air of an 'official version' and make it look like a means to elevate the cult (i.e., the goddess) to a higher (purer) level. (Cf. Āṉaimalai, where the myth of Rāma has created an atmosphere in which Mācāṇiyamman can be made acceptable to Vaiṣṇavas). While the myth tries to push the cult upwards, the cult (i.e., the ritual to which the myth has been attached) pulls the myth downwards (goats are sacrificed to the heads of Brahmā!). Through the myth, the devotee is able to see his god in the larger context of Hinduism and in a more other-worldly oriented sphere, whereas in the ritual context, the devotee sees his god foremost as the fulfiller of his, the devotee's, immediate and this-wordly oriented needs. Myth and ritual need not fit, they may overlap or be loosely connected; what matters is the ritual's material efficacy (a result is expected) which addresses itself to the individual and the myth's spiritual efficacy, not so much in the sense of a spiritual goal such as *mokṣa*, for instance, (this should be gained through the ritual as well), but in the sense of a spiritual state, providing the devotee with a cultural framework which allows him to move from his own historical time into a mythical time, the time which, to some degree, defines his world and gives his existence a deeper meaning.

2. Myth 3: Vallālarājan.

The many versions of this myth (about twenty) all agree on the main points: an evil king has to be taught a lesson. The goddess plays midwife and pulls open the queen's stomach in order to remove the child therein.

2.1. The king (variations)

The king is most of the time called Vallāḷarāja̲n̲, once Kāśī Vallāḷarāja̲n̲ (Kumpak.), twice Vallāḷakanta̲n̲ (Teli, Mutta.), once Vallāḷakavuntar (Pol.) or Vallāḷarāja̲n̲, a Kavuntar (Orrai.); once Vallāḷatitirāksa̲n̲ (Rat.), or simply 'Asura̲n̲' (Tri-P.).

His image is that of an evil ruler whose three major faults, his extreme pride, his miserliness and his rejection of the goddess, lead to his downfall.

'Vallāḷarāja̲n̲ was a miser who neither gave loans nor paid back loans. A drought was in his kingdom, there was no food, there were no jobs. The *kūli* (hired labourers) went to Vallāḷa's house and asked for a job, namely, to pound rice. They pounded the rice all day long, but in return they only received the husk. The *kūli* looked skyward and prayed: 'Why have you not given us rain, why did you push us into these circumstances?' One morning, on the way to the king's house, the *kūli* met an old woman. She asked them where they were going, and they said: 'To the king's house to pound rice; if we don't go there, we won't have anything to eat.' Since they had talked to the old woman, they got very much delayed and were afraid, but the old woman consoled them. When the *kūli* reached the palace, the person in charge told them: 'Since you are delayed, you will not be able to do the work you are supposed to do.' The women insisted that they would do the usual load of work, despite their being late. When they were given the paddy, the *kūli* thought of the old lady, and in one stroke husk and rice were separated. In one hour they finished a whole day's work.' (Kuppucci.)

Vallāḷa's miserliness affects his kingdom: 'The poor were not fed, people were barren and even cows and buffaloes were barren.' (Kovai). The king's own childlessness is due to his miserliness, and by not giving food to even a poor old woman, he neglects his royal duty. This gross injustice on the part of the king, nevertheless, leads to the pregnancy of one of his queens, but the pregnancy becomes a curse, rather than a blessing:

'Īśvarī in the form of a 90-year-old woman came there; when she came to Vallāḷarāja̲n̲'s fort, she had no teeth in her mouth and no voice in her throat. When she came to the fort, she said: 'Appā,

you have to give me five strands of jasmin flowers (*piccippū*), a bit of curds, some water. If you give me some butter-milk (*mōr*) and water, you will get *mōṭcam* (*mokṣa*).' For twelve years no beggar had come to the fort. The rājā had placed a male and a female *muṉi* (demon) as guardians at the door of his fort, and he had locked the place so securely that not even a crow could enter. The guards, when they saw the old woman, thought that they could eat her. Therefore, Īśvarī changed into her terrifying form; with terrible teeth (*ciṅkappal*) and black as charcoal, dressed in snakes and a heavy golden belt which was flashing, and with anklets on her feet, thus she came, with the *pampai* drum in her hand. She sang and danced and by means of the three-letter mantra she entered the fort. She said to the youngest wife of the seven: 'Give me some curds, some butter-milk. I left Tāyaṉūr, Malaiyaṉūr, I left the one-eyed termite hill (*orraikkaṉ purru*). I am as soft as cotton, but those who go against me I kill; I join those who beat their chests and I take them on my lap. You don't recognize my *cuvarūpam* (own or true form). If you give me milk, water, you will get a son.' The tax minister called the maidservant and said: 'Some *pēy*, *picācu*, some dead-bodies-eating Rākṣasa (*piṇam tiṉra rākṣacaṉ*) has come into our castle, give this one some old rice (rice which not even the crow would eat)[1]. They gave her a quarter measure rice. Īśvarī received it into her sari end. They poured out half a measure of strained gruel for her. Īśvarī said: 'I don't want all this, I want water and butter-milk, if you give me these, you will have a son.' The youngest of the wives, she was beating up butter-milk and curds, got angry. She lifted up the curd vessel and was about to hit the old woman. When she wanted to hit her with one hand, the Ammaṉ warded the blow off with her two hands. Then, the Ammaṉ, who had fearful teeth and flowing matted hair (*caṭai*), became furious. The sweat fell from her forehead onto mother earth (*pūmā tēvi*), and, from the sweat, Vīrapattiraṉ was born. She said to her son: 'On earth, the knot which god (*āṇṭavaṉ*) ties has to be untied after ten months,[2] therefore, you will be in the belly of Vallāḷarājaṉ's wife for sixteen months...' (Venk. informant (2)).

[1] Informant's comment.

[2] i.e., the mother has to give birth to the child after nine, respectively ten months.

In another version, it is again the goddess who causes the pregnancy: Vallālarājaṉ had seven wives, but no children. The goddess told the king that if he would give to the poor (give *tāṉam*), he would get a son by the youngest wife. She then asked for money, but she was chased away. Then the goddess asked the wives for some money, but they said that they would only give her something when the child was born. The goddess returned to the forest. Later she came again to the palace, in the guise of a fortune-teller, and asked for some money, but the king told his soldiers to catch her by her hair and to throw her out. Then, with her power, the old woman (the goddess) made one of the wives pregnant (Tri-U.). Some versions give a much more pressing reason for the need to kill or humble the king: the king had obtained the boon of immortality (Mutta., Cit.) or the boon that nobody could kill him (Tri-U.), and he immediately started to attack the gods. (We recognize the typical demon who, as soon as he secures his boon, starts to take over the worlds of men and gods). Another equally dangerous and powerful boon which Vallāḷa gets is that Śiva will be born as his own son (Mal., Teli, Kumpak., Tiruva., Tinti.). Śiva himself grants the king his wish, despite Devī's objections, because, as Śiva says, 'I cannot but grant a boon to those who do *tavam*' (Mal.). If this child (Śiva) were born, the whole world would be destroyed (Tiruva.) or, the child would burn down the whole world (Valpettai). The goddess is the only one who can punish the king for his impertinence and prevent a great disaster.

2.2. The goddess (variations)

Typically the goddess lives in the forest (Tri.U., Orrai.), sits under a banyan tree (Tiruva., Teli), she sleeps on a bier in the cremation ground (Mutta.). She comes to the king's fort in the guise of an old woman, a fortune-teller (*kuṟatti*), even a widow (Orrai.). She has the power to eliminate the guards of the king's fort with a spell (Venk.) or with holy ashes (Mutta.) and to make the queen pregnant with ashes from her *kapālam* (Kuppucci.), or with turmeric, which the queen has to apply on her body (Kovai); and, of course, she makes sure that there is no midwife in the kingdom. When the queen's pregnancy has reached the tenth month (eighth month - Kuppucci., Kal.; twelfth month - Tri-U., Iraci., sixteenth month - Venk.), the midwife has to be found. The goddess agrees to deliver the child, but the king has to bring her (the goddess) to the fort on the royal palanquin:

'The minister ran fast and brought the lion-faced palanquin. When she sat into the palanquin, she chanted the three-letter mantra, and the palanquin and mother earth (*pūmā tēvi*) became one (i.e., the palanquin became stuck to the ground). They could not lift it. Nobody knew Ammaṉ's *cuvarūpam*. When they reached the fort, Ammaṉ, to show her *cuvarūpam*, shook the universe (*aṇṭam*), the sky and the earth; even then Vallāḷarājaṉ did not worship her. A big crowd and all kinds of army battalions had assembled. 'Isn't it a great miracle, after ten months god should have untied the knot, now already sixteen months have passed,' thought the people. Īśvarī reflected for a while and said: 'In this fort, I will not help with the birth. I shall deliver the child on the west side[1] of the town, in a garden, in a forest (*kāṭu*), in a hut made of thatch.' (Venk. informant (2)).

Instead of a hut, the goddess asks for a new *pantal* to be built where she can be alone with the queen (Tri-U., Valpettai), and she demands that it should be ready for midnight (Kal.); or, she says that a tent or pavillion (*kūṭāram*) should be erected (Kovai). She further stipulates: 'When I come tonight, there should be no light anywhere; the king and his brother should hide in a room. Nobody should be in the streets' (Mutta.).

'Īśvarī, with the axe in her hand, split open the woman from the head down, she took out the child, put it in a basket. She took the liver, put it in her mouth, she took the intestines and garlanded herself with them; she took all the blood and smeared it on herself; then she picked up the child and left. In the forest she placed the child in a cradle, rocked it and sang a lullaby. She came back to Tāyaṉūr. The thousand armies found a body lying there, the child and the intestines were missing. 'This must have been the work of a *pēy* or *picācu*! If you find this old woman anywhere, cut her into small pieces or bring her to the fort,' said Vallāḷa. Then Īśvarī got horribly mad and from her sweat, which fell on the earth, various heroes were born, such as Vīrapattiracāmi with the 1008 *liṅkam*, Maturai Vīracāmi and Karuppaṉacāmi, all brothers. She told them to fight with Vallāḷa's armies. When

[1] The west is the direction associated with fertility and pregnancy, cf. Das, V. (1982), p. 107.

Vallālarājaṉ saw that whenever the brothers were cut to death, they were immediately reborn, he thought: 'These are no humans, this is the dance of the serpent maiden of the one-eyed termite hill (*orraikkaṉpurru nāka kaṉṉi āttam*).' When his army was routed, all the people assembled and bowed in front of the goddess: 'Mother, Ammā, we worship your feet, nobody knows your *cuvarūpam*.' Then the goddess caused all the people in Vallāḷa's fort to be blind for a short while. She placed the child beside the (dead body of the) queen, replaced the liver and intestines, and sprinkled some *vipūti* from the skull (*maṇṭaiyōṭu*). When the people later saw the child alive, looking so beautiful, as if it had just arisen from sleep, they brought much *poṅkal*[1] for the Ammaṉ and named their male children Aṅkamuttu and their girls Aṅkammā.'(Venk. informant (2)).

In the Uṟaiyūr (Tri-U.) version, Aṅkāḷammaṉ, as Pēcci, after she has removed the foetus from the queen's belly, takes the form of Kāḷi, and the king, seeing the woman with the intestines around her neck, thinks she is a *pēy* and orders the soldiers to hit her. Here too, the goddess creates a helper, Akōra Vīrapattiraṉ, who slays the soldiers. When the king falls at the goddess' feet, she tells him that henceforth he should be a just king and feed the poor and anyone born in his family should bear the name Aṅkāḷammaṉ. The king promises and he also builds a choultry (*cattiram*) in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai to feed the poor. The Malaiyaṉūr version has the king promise to build a *kōpuram* for the goddess at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (i.e., the one of the Aruṇācala temple).

What happens to the child or the foetus varies: the goddess kills it (Śiva! - Mal.); Śiva goes to heaven (Kumpak., Tinti.); she makes the child (Irulappaṉ) her guard (*kāval*) (Kuppucci., Orrai.); she restores it or she tells him (Irulappaṉ) to kill the king and his brothers (Mutta.). The queen dies in most versions. Not much thought is given to the poor pregnant queen who has to suffer for her husband's deeds. Only one variant states the obvious reason why the goddess cannot allow the child to be born: since the child is a god (here: Akōra Vīrapattiraṉ), the queen cannot give birth to him in the natural way, therefore the goddess (*aṉticci*) tears open the queen's stomach and removes the child (Tri-P.).

[1] Boiled rice.

In all the versions the goddess' terrifying aspect is emphasized, she is compared to a *pēy*, a *picācu*. The following variant goes even a step further, it alludes to the goddess' necrophagous nature:

'After they had found the dead body of the queen, they consoled themselves that the deed must have been done by some *pēy* or *picācu*, and they set up the funeral pire and cremated the queen. On the third day, they came back for the funeral rites (*īmakkiriyai*). In the cremation ground they saw the old woman who had delivered the child. She was eating the ashes etc., which lay at the place where the queen had been burned. Seeing this, their peace of mind was gone; they thought: 'She will kill and eat us too;' and they ran away. The king, however, with a broken heart, thought: 'If I go back like this (i.e., without doing anything), my subjects will reproach me' (i.e., for his cowardliness). He approached the old lady with folded hands, greeted her, bent down, worshipped her thus and said: 'Kill me as well and eat me.' The Ammaṉ then felt sorry for him, consoled and appeased him. She told him to build a tent in the cremation ground. This was done. Quickly then the Ammaṉ joined the ashes into one, sprinkled some sacred water on them, stroked them with her cane (*pirampu*) and resurrected the queen. Then she called Pūmā tēvi, to whom she had previously given the child. She took the child and handed it over to the queen, saying: 'I came as fortune-teller and gave you the boon of a child; I came as midwife and took your life; as Aṅkāḷammaṉ I gave you back your life. You have to establish temples for me.' Then she disappeared. Then the spirit (*āvēcam*) of Aṅkāḷammaṉ took possession of one person in the crowd and said: 'There will be miracles; build temples and tanks; make a *kuṇṭam* (a bed of hot coals) in front of the temple, place a flower pot (*pūṅkarakam*) on the *pūcāri*'s head, call me (the Ammaṉ) and do *pūcai*; enter the *kuṇṭam*, then you will know my power (*cakti*).' Then she removed the curtain from the tent and said: 'Look!' They saw the queen giving milk to the child. Then the king built a temple for Aṅkāḷammaṉ and worshipped her.' (Kovai).

This myth is, in opposition to the other myths (Śiva's brahminicide, Dakṣa's sacrifice), first of all, very much a mother-goddess myth and secondly, a myth which seems particularly tailored to fit Aṅkāḷammaṉ.

The myth is current in Andhra Pradesh as well and is part of a greater corpus of myths dealing with Aṅkammā:[1] 'The Trimūrti and other gods conspire to kill Aṅkammā. They cause a boy to grow for twelve years in the womb of queen Sukhasthāna Gaṅgammā,[2] a boy who will kill the goddess. Aṅkammā goes to Nāgaloka where she changes herself into an old woman, a fortune-teller, a Yerukula woman;[3] she is ornamented with snakes and poisonous scorpions. She explains to the king (whose *kula teyvam* she is) that only in this disguise can she lay her hands on the boy. She then proceeds to the city where the boy is and through her third eye realizes that she has to get rid of the boy before he is born, because once he is born, nobody will be able to harm him, including the gods. As a parrot she flies into the queen's room, wakes her up by beating her wings - because killing someone in sleep is a sin. The queen gets labour pains. No midwife can be found; there is only the old Yerukula woman who says she knows how to deliver a child. The goddess looks at the queen and says that the child will be born through the back of the queen and that therefore she cannot help her in the delivery. The queen, however, pleads and promises the old woman in return many buffaloes for ploughing the fields. The old woman, thereupon, acquiesces, but she stipulates that the delivery has to be done to the north of the town (i.e., in the cremation ground - Murty). After the queen has been placed in a pit, the goddess takes on a form with twelve hands, and with golden claws she splits open the queen's back. The boy, however, jumps sky-high and gets away. The goddess pursues the boy and tries, by various means, to kill him. She finally manages to cut his throat, drink his blood, smash his skull and tear open his belly. She puts the remaining parts of the corpse into a basket and carries it around town for some time, singing lullabies.'

In this myth from Andhra Pradesh, the goddess' enemy is not only a king devoted to a god or gods who constitute a threat to her, but they are the gods themselves (the Trimūrti and some minor deities, i.e.,

[1] I thank Dr. M.L.K. Murty, Dept. of Archaeology, Poona University, Deccan College, for lending me his notes on the lecture he gave in 1983 at Heidelberg University about the mother-goddess worship in Andhra. Dr. Murty's article on the same topic will be published shortly in a book on the mother-goddess, edited by himself and Prof. Dr. G. Sontheimer.

[2] She is the wife of king Śataparanji Rāju who rules an area beyond the Pālasamudram (the ocean of milk). The goddess is the *kula devī* of the Mārācirājulu, a royal family (kṣatriya) also called Sivara Kāmbhojulu and she helps them to wage war against their enemies (Māndava Rāju).

[3] or Yerukala. Thurston's Yerragolla? (a subdivision of Toṭṭiyaṉ).

Jāvādi Devatas, Vanadevatas etc.) who plan to destroy the goddess. In the Vallāḷa myth, the goddess' acts seem of the nature of a personal revenge; she has no backing from anyone and neither do her deeds benefit anyone else but her. In the Andhra version, the goddess has to act in self-defense: the boy threatens her existence, but not only that, his survival would mean the end of those kings who have chosen to place their fate into the hands of Aṅkammā (before the boy is finally killed, he vows to avenge the death of his mother by destroying the clan of the Mārācirājulu and their *kula teyvam*, Aṅkammā). Aṅkammā has to prove herself as a clan goddess and that includes leading her devotees to victory in battle. Whichever territory the kings, with her help, conquer, that is the territory she will rule over and, gaining that territory (whether mythical or real - the enemy king lives beyond the ocean of milk) at the expense of the Trimūrti suits the goddess fine. In the Vallāḷa myth, the goddess' territory is not a piece of land ruled over by a king devoted to her (as it is in the Andhra version); Aṅkāḷammaṉ's territory seems confined to life-cycle rites and attendant problems which families, whose *kula teyvam* she is, might experience; in other words, Aṅkāḷammaṉ of Tamilnadu is only a *kula teyvam*, Aṅkammā of Andhra is a *kula teyvam* and, because favoured by rulers, also a 'state' deity (i.e., she has more to lose). Some variants of the Vallāḷa myth have the king (Vallāḷarājaṉ) promise to accept Aṅkāḷammaṉ as *kula teyvam*, but that is the end of the myth (none of the Hoysaḷa Ballāḷas are known to have had Aṅkāḷammaṉ as *kula teyvam*), whereas in the Andhra version, we see Ankammā already at the beginning well established as *kula teyvam* of a royal family. The antagonism between the goddess and the 'male god(s) in heaven'[1] is much more evident in the Andhra version and also in the myth of Ammavaru cited by Whitehead (where the goddess wages war on Śiva directly).[2] Nevertheless, in making the child in Vallāḷarāṇī's womb Śiva, a tension between the goddess and the 'male god in heaven' is evident (Mal. version, where the goddess actually kills the child, Śiva). Perhaps Aṅkāḷammaṉ is afraid to lose her devotees to a Śiva over whom she has no control (as long as he is *her* child, i.e., in the form of Vīrabhadra, he is no

[1] Cf. Ch. I: the myths state, that the goddess has to come down to earth, while Śiva or the Trimūrti live in heaven. Only as Pārvatī can the goddess reside in heaven, but never as Aṅkāḷammaṉ.

[2] Whitehead (1976), p. 126 ff., at p. 131.

threat to her). In the Ammavaru myth, a number of kings change from the goddess' camp over to that of Śiva.[1] The goddess' position on earth certainly is (or has become) vulnerable. Aṅkālammaṉ, unlike Ammavaru, does not lead her armies against Śiva - nor would she want to do so necessarily, since Śiva, on another level, is already her husband - but at least she can further her cause and spread her fame by demonstrating that her powers are needed as well and that even the most powerful king, with Śiva on his side, has to bow to the mid-wife.

2.3.1. The goddess and the 'king': *vana* and *ksetra*

Vallālarājaṉ lives in an impregnable fortress guarded by fierce demons. The town of Śiva, Devagiri, which Ammavaru threatens to annihilate, is guarded 'by four huge demons, with ten thousand crores of men holding canes colored green, and seven hundred crores holding canes colored red.' Beggars and mendicants are not allowed to enter the town.[2] Another powerful man whom Aṅkālammaṉ tries to make submit to her wishes is a wealthy Ācāri, a government official:[3] 'he was so wealthy that he had a palace surrounded by eight walls, but he also had the sorrow of having only one son.' (This son becomes the main target of the goddess' attacks against the Ācāri, when the latter refuses to build a temple for her). The priest whom Aṅkālammaṉ sends to the Ācāri has 'to make his way through seven gates, and past seven guards'...

The goddess' 'enemies' live in towns, they are rich, powerful, while she herself comes from the forest, is poor (a beggar), a 'powerless' old woman. The fort with its walls and guards suggests a well-ordered space, a hierarchical structure and clearly defined boundaries, it also suggests a king and his army. The forest, on the contrary, is the space of wilderness, of the unexpected. Sontheimer[4] uses the terms *vana* and *kṣetra*. *Vana* he defines as the ''wild space', 'forest' or jungle which harbours the 'hermitage', the tribals, the *saṃnyāsi* and the *āśrama*'; while by *kṣetra* he means the 'inhabited, well-settled space with regular plough agriculture, the village in such space, e.g., the *agrahāra* villages in coastal Karnāṭaka or *śāsana* villages in Orissa,

[1] Whitehead (1976), p. 131.
[2] *ibid.*
[3] Beck (1972), p. 99-100.
[4] Sontheimer, 'The *vana* and the *kṣetra*', p. 9.

and the holy centres.' Sontheimer's article makes it clear that his terms can include an abstract space as well: *vana* contains also the dangerous, unbounded power, the liminal space where transformations take place, while the *ksetra* incorporates the bounded, integrated and, in the words of Marie-Louise Reiniche,[1] 'le règne du dharma dont les brahmanes sont dépositaires, du monde tel qu'il doit être, et corrélativement des distinctions qu'il établit entres les hommes (varna, castes)...'

Aṅkālamman is a goddess of the *vana*.[2] She lives in the forest, sits under trees, sleeps in cremation grounds, changes herself into various forms. She is the snake, the bird (she dresses in feathers - Mal.), the parrot (in the Andhra version and in the Ammavaru myth); she is the termite hill,[3] she is the fortune-teller, the tribal (Kuṟavar, Yerukula) from the outside. She does not fight with conventional weapons, but uses magical spells.[4] Her aim is to enter the *ksetra*, to be recognized and worshipped by the ruler of the *ksetra*.

The ruler par excellence of the *ksetra* is the king. Nancy Falk,[5] citing Buddhist and Hindu sources, points out that 'kingship maintained a distinctive relationship with the wilderness and its various symbols and beings. Kings won certain aspects of their authority from the wilderness, and a representative of the wilderness in turn might symbolize a divine king.'[6] One such being of the wilderness was often a Yaksa, and as long as its shrine was tended by the king, the kingdom prospered.[7] It was important that the king maintain the proper relationship to the wilderness, wilderness not only as a place, a location, but also as a concept: 'chaos,... the primal, unformed reality...', as Falk calls it,[8] or the place of death and rebirth.

[1] Reiniche (1975) makes the distinction: 'espace extérieur', corresponding to *vana* and 'espace intérieur', corresponding to *ksetra*, p. 199.

[2] Siva, although in some of his forms (i.e., as Kapālin, Bhairava, etc.) belongs to the *vana*, is here a *ksetra* deity. In Tamilnadu the goddess was generally only acceptable to the *ksetra* as wife of Śiva and not as independent virgin. Cf. Shulman (1980) who discusses this topic in detail.

[3] The termite hill appears in the garden of Malaiyaracaṉ (myth 10). For a comparison of the 'pleasure park' with the 'caitya', the shrine associated with a 'wilderness being', see Falk (1973), p. 4-5.

[4] Cf. also Beck (1972), p. 100.

[5] Falk (1973)

[6] *ibid.*, p. 13.

[7] *ibid.*, p. 4-5.

[8] *ibid.*, p. 14.

Vallālarājan fails on two accounts in maintaining the proper relationship with the *vana*: he refuses entrance into his fort to the 'outsider', and he fails to recognize the goddess and to acknowledge her supremacy in matters of birth (and death), even after she has displayed her power (according to the Āmūr version, the proud king did not offer the child-money to the goddess after he had received the boon of a child) The king, in his arrogance, considers his fort impregnable, his power absolute, his own position secure and with the boon from Śiva in his pocket, or the child in his wife's womb, nothing seems to stand in his way to conquer even the gods. However, even the most powerful king must contend with the forces of the *vana* and without a proper acknowledgment of and exchange with them, he and his kingdom will suffer.[1]

The goddess' role and disguises are fully appropriate: 'I came as a fortune-teller and gave you the boon of a child..' (Kovai), the goddess says to the queen. As the tribal, fortune-teller (or widow) she is the 'outsider',[2] she belongs to the socially inferior, the weak and at the same time (or because of it)[3] she wields the kind of power by which conventional defenses and structures are broken down and by which productive and revivifying forces are injected into the rigid order of the *kṣetra* (it is a healing process: through the goddess' intervention, the king's adharmic rule is changed, barrenness is followed by fertility). As midwife, the goddess' function is made most explicit. She is at the place of transition (not only the liminal space, the space of confinement of the pregnant queen, but also the wilderness space, the place outside the fort where the queen is brought to give birth), she helps in the rite of transition (birth) and she is the cause of another transition (death). It is maybe not accidental, that the goddess is carried to the king's fort on a palanquin. Van Gennep[4] equates the act of being carried with a transition rite. The goddess herself is, so to speak, in a state of transition. She is not

[1] For such a relationship between 'outsider' and king, cf. Shulman ('On South Indian Bandits and Kings'), (1980). Cf. Claus (1978), p. 9 and 10, whose ideas on the relationship between wilderness and kingdom are similar to those of Falk.

[2] Shulman ('On South Indian Bandits and Kings'), p. 290; cf. Turner (1969), p. 116, 117.

[3] Cf. Turner (1969), p. 99-100; 108-110.

[4] Van Gennep (1960), p. 185.

her 'true' self, she is disguised.[1] Under the garb of the weak and inferior is hidden the all-powerful Śakti, the one who creates, destroys and re-creates life. As Aṅkālamman she is finally established in the *kṣetra*, her true identity is recognized, a temple is built for her and she becomes an integral part of the society. Through her presence and the worship of her, the harmony between the *vana* and the *kṣetra* is maintained.

2.3.2. The virgin mother

If above we talked about a tension between Śiva and the goddess, we have to keep in mind that it is not a central theme in the Vallāla myth. The child in the womb of the queen is never explicitly stated to be a threat to the goddess (in any of the versions) and where the child is Śiva (in 5 versions: Mal. (1) and (2), Teli, Tinti., Kumpak.) the goddess' first worry is to save men and gods from the demonic intentions of Vallāḷarājan, and as to her concern that Śiva may usurp her own reign, this can only be presumed. What she does object to is that Śiva grants the king the boon (to become incarnate as his son) without consulting her on the matter (Mal. (2)). Very much like a possessive mother, the goddess cannot tolerate it when Śiva acts independently, and especially not when he meddles into affairs which are *her* concern. Vallāḷarājan, in the end, has to submit to the goddess, and Śiva cannot save him, for childbirth is the goddess' territory. The goddess then, as far as the Vallāla myth is concerned, though she is Śiva's wife (in these five versions), is in no way the weak, submissive woman; she is, in fact, (and other versions concur) the only one whose power can match that of the king. In most of the Vallāla versions, however, Śiva does not enter the picture, and even if Vīrabhadra[2] and Irulappan can be multiforms of Śiva, they are never anything else but the goddess' children, i.e., they are never her husband (or lover). Despite certain images in this myth which can be compared to the Durgāmahiṣāsuramardinī myth (e.g., the goddess who is called by the gods to save them from the demon; the demon and Śiva *bhakta* who has his head cut off[3] - here not by the

[1] Cf. the Pāndavas who have to spend the 13th year living in disguise before they can become their 'true selves' again, cf. van Buitenen (1978), p. 3-10.

[2] who generally can be both, the goddess' and Śiva's son, depending on the context: in the oral versions of the Dakṣa myth he is usually Śiva's son.

[3] Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 176 ff., Van Kooij (1972), p. 116 (*Kālikāpurāṇa* 62.124-125.)

goddess herself), Aṅkāḷammaṉ is not Durgā, and the Vallāḷa myth expresses essentially something different from a demon(lover) - goddess struggle.

The goddess (especially Pēcci, Kāḷi) is a virgin (*kaṉṉi*), we remember, and yet in most versions she is depicted as mother. She creates these children by herself (without the help of any male - even when, as Aṅkāḷammaṉ, the myths may make her the wife of Śiva): they issue from her sweat, they are called into being by her power of magic. Aṅkāḷammaṉ, on her way to the king's fort is (in at least three versions) accompanied by a child, despite her old age: In the Citamparam version, Aṅkāḷammaṉ changes Vīrapattiraṉ into a baby because 'children are not allowed into the king's city'; in the Muttaṉampāḷaiyam version Aṅkāḷammaṉ is so old that she is hard of hearing, has poor eyesight and is so feeble that she cannot walk (the reason she cites for having to be taken to the king on a palanquin). No wonder then that the ministers who carry the old lady in the palanquin run off, afraid, when, suddenly, they hear a baby crying in the palanquin. Thinking that the old woman is a witch, they run to fetch the king, but upon his arrival, he finds only the old lady.[1] The myth contrasts the fertile hag with the barren young queen. We have seen above that the goddess 'implants' her own child into the womb of the queen, that she treats the child which she removes from the queen like her own (she rocks it in a cradle, sings lullabies), or that she carries the child away with her to assign him a permanent place beside her as guard. Pēcci is often depicted with a child in her arm and in rarer cases, Aṅkāḷammaṉ is shown with Pāvāṭairāyaṉ on her lap (see pictures). No doubt then, the motherly, fertile aspect of the goddess is of considerable importance. The one and most potent proof of motherhood, however, is denied the goddess: pregnancy and childbirth. Can one, perhaps, detect a certain amount of jealousy in the goddess' behavior, when she rips the child out of the queen's belly, or when she lets the queen suffer a sixteen months pregnancy?[2] Is not, in fact, the violent act done to the queen a means by which the goddess herself could become pregnant?

[1] Cf. also Teli version (myth 3).

[2] Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 247: Umā, jealous because the *śaktis* become pregnant at the sight of Śiva, curses them to endure a long pregnancy (from *Kantapurāṇam*).

In an early version of the Skanda myth cited by Shulman,[1] the six virtuous wives of the sages (Kṛttikās) get pregnant when they eat the remains of the burned foetus which had been violently taken from Umā's womb (Śiva cut it to pieces with a hatchet). They give birth to Murukaṉ. Shulman remarks on the chastity of the Kṛttikās and states that in the Tamil folk tradition they are virgins. 'Sometimes these folk goddesses have no individual consorts at all, although they are still depicted with a child in their arms.... The Seven Mothers are fertile virgins (*kaṉṉimār*) untouched by any husband....'[2]

Although Aṅkālammaṉ does not eat the foetus or child which she 'steals' from the queen, we see her (in the Kovai version) eating the ashes of the burned queen, just as, in the ritual, the goddess' devotees eat the ashes of the cremation ground figure in order (among other things) to get pregnant. We do, of course, have a 'pregnant' goddess, not in the myth, but in the ritual. The figure in the cremation ground is most of the time the goddess herself. Her position is the same as that of the queen in the myth, ready to give birth. The children of Macāṉiyammaṉ not only surround her, they are also between her legs, as if they popped out of her continuously. The myth, however, does not concur on this point; nevertheless, its message is clear: only with the goddess' grace can a child be born and live, for she is the 'mother' of all children. Before we say more about this, we should mention another myth about Vallālarājaṉ.

2.3.3. The Vallāla myth in the *Aruṇācalapurāṇam*

In the above myth, Vallālarājaṉ is often identified with a Vallāla king of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, more specifically, with the king who built one of the *kōpuram* of the Aruṇācala temple. We have already identified this Vallāla with Ballāla III, the Hoysala king.[3] The *Vallālamakārājaṉ carittiram* of the *Aruṇācalapurāṇam*[4] tells the story of the childless king Vallāla who again is identified with Ballāla III.[5] The following is a short summary:

[1] Shulman (1980), p. 248-249.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 250. Cf. Kosambi (1962), p. 90; Sontheimer (1974), p. 171. Sontheimer (1981), p. 103;

[3] Ch. II, B.9.

[4] *Aruṇācalapurāṇam* by Ellappanāvalar (1898).

[5] Derrett (1957), p. 170.

'There was a king called Vallālarājaṉ in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. He was a perfect ruler, just, prosperous, faithful to his wife and a devout worshipper of Śiva. There was no misery, no poverty in his kingdom. Despite all the splendour, prosperity and justice, the king had no offspring, which saddened him greatly. On the advice of his ministers, who also saw no fault in the king's rule, he had proclaimed that anyone in his kingdom who had need of anything would be given it by the king. People came and the king distributed to them whatever they needed. Nārada heard about this and came to the king's palace to find out the reason for the king's generosity. After Nārada had learned that it was a son which the king hoped to get by these means, he went to Kailāsa and informed Śiva on the matter. Śiva then decided to test his devotee, the king, and together with his *gaṇa*, all disguised as *caṅkamar* (*kaḷ*) (Liṅgāyats), he came to Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. In the streets of the courtesans (*kaṇikai*) each of the *caṅkamarkaḷ* took a girl, while Śiva (as *caṅkamar*) went to the king and requested to be given a woman. Since all the women of the town were occupied with Śiva's companions, the ministers could not find a woman for Śiva. The king was worried that he would not be able to fulfil his promise. The younger of the queens, seeing her husband's sorrow, offered herself as lover for the Liṅgāyat, to which the king agreed. When the queen embraced Śiva, he turned into a child. The king, who heard the child crying, came running into the room, thinking that this had to be one of Śiva's divine plays (*tiruviḷaiyāṭaḷ*). When he picked up the child and embraced it, it disappeared. The king then praised Śiva, and Śiva in turn promised the king that when the time of the king's death would come, he (Śiva) himself would perform all the necessary religious rites (*caṭaṅku*) for the king (i.e., those which usually the son performs).

This myth does not have much in common with the myth discussed above. The king's name, his wish to have a son and the child Śiva are the shared elements. The Aruṇācala version dispenses with the goddess and shifts the emphasis from the queen and the child-bearing process to the king and his devotion to Śiva. Śiva comes to test the king and as a true devotee and as one who has to be true to his word, the king has to give his wife to the stranger.[1] The myth further expands the simple mother-son relationship into

[1] Cf. Shulman (1980), p. 158 ff. for myths dealing with the same motif: the stranger (god) who comes to test his devotee by demanding his wife.

one of lovers. Śiva's eroticism, though stressed (by his erotic entourage, the *gana* turned Lingāyats who are matched with the courtesans) is none the less cut short in the presence of the queen, who herself is quite willing to be his lover: she perfumes herself and plays the *vīnai* for Śiva, while he lies on the bed, immobile. When she embraces him, he becomes a child, thereby saving the queen's chastity.[1] Comparing the two myths which have different backgrounds, shows us that the concerns of the 'brahmanized' śaiva tradition are quite different from those of the mother-goddess cult; though sons and devotion to the god are important issues of both, one will admit the erotic and ban the impure, while the other, rather than using the subtler means of seduction, swings the sword.

What has Ballāla III to do in the middle of the rivalling factions of the mother goddess and Śiva? From very little to nothing at all. Derrett's[2] comment on this myth is worth quoting:

> 'The *Arunācala-purānam*, a much later composition, retails a scandalous story of Ballāla's having been sonless and having gone to certain improbable lengths to acquire a son during his stay at Tiruvannāmalai. The seventh canto of that work, called *Vallāla-magarācan-carukkam*, 'the chapter on the great King Ballāla', gives the impression that the king was well established there, and was renowned for his virtues. As if to disprove the main point of the puerile story there detailed (a rather disgusting example of *niyōga*[3] in an age which had long rejected that institution), we have evidence that the king actually crowned his son Ballāla IV in the city of Tiruvannāmalai: an inscription of October 1340 states that he had been engaged in 'performing a coronation to the kingdom'.'

How did Vallāla or Ballāla's name become attached to these myths? We don't know, however, there is a possibility that not Ballāla III, but Ballāla I kindled the imagination of the myth makers. Derrett[4] writes:

[1] Unlike Anasūyā, the queen does not curse Śiva to become a child - he is decent enough to think of the transformation himself. For Anasūyā cf. O'Flaherty (1981), p. 100.

[2] Derrett (1957), p. 170-171.

[3] 'A practice of obtaining offspring by deputy. References to it in the Epics give an authentic antique flavour to Elappa-nāvalar's tale; but of course no civilized subjects of the Hoysala can have submitted to *niyōga*.' (Derrett).

[4] Derrett (1957), p. 43.

'Ballāla [I] seems to have been sonless, and it was perhaps in an attempt to obtain a son that late in life he married three daughters of a family henchman. If he had a son by any of them the child must have died soon afterwards...'

Although Ballāla I's kingdom never extended as far south or east as Tiruvannāmalai, a legend surrounding his childlessness may nevertheless have reached the area of Tiruvannāmalai and then have been tagged onto Ballāla III. Both Ballāla I and Ballāla III seem to have favoured śaivism, and this would explain why the Arunācala version sees the king in an advantageous light, while the Aṅkālamman versions of the myth make him an enemy of the goddess.

Where the theme of the Vallāla myth originated, we do not know. It is possible that it was brought to Tamilnadu from Andhra and was then changed by substituting other, more locally known rulers. The images in the myth are, however, not new creations. We think of Narasiṃha who ripped open the stomach of Hiraṇyakaśipu, or of Indra who cut the embryo in Diti's womb into seven pieces.[1] Kālī herself is often depicted as garlanded with intestines.[2]

[1] Cf. O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 92 ff (quoting Rāmāyaṇa 1.47.15-32, 1.48.1-10).

[2] Kinsley (1975), p. 98, 138.

C. Meaning of the core rituals

So far we have described the core rituals in terms of how they are performed, we have then tried to take a closer look at the elements of the ritual and lastly we have made some remarks on the two myths most commonly associated with the ritual. The next question which poses itself is: what does the ritual mean?

It should be made clear, at the outset, that the following discussion on the meaning of the core rituals can only provide tentative answers and that, whatever meaning we arrive at, it can be no more than a partial statement, for an important part of the meaning derives from an experience from which the 'onlooker' is excluded: the experience of participation. Geertz's remarks seem appropriate here: 'Where for 'visitors' religious performances can, in the nature of the case, only be presentations of a particular religious perspective, and thus aesthetically appreciated or scientifically dissected, for participants they are in addition enactments, materializations, realizations of it - not only models *of* what they believe, but also models *for* the believing of it.' (Italics original).[1] Added to the fact that the 'visitor' misses out on a direct experience produced by participation in the ritual is the 'foreign visitor's' difficulty in establishing the same type of relationship with the ritual symbols which exists between them and the 'native'. An 'outsider' to the cultural heritage he studies will find it difficult to share the *mood*[2] which the religious symbols or images (and the whole ritual apparatus) evoke in the one to whom these symbols or images have been transmitted as part of his cultural heritage. For instance, the goddess garlanded with the intestines will mean more to the performer of or participant in the ritual than *just* a goddess garlanded with intestines (which is all it will mean to the 'visitor'); the devotee (performer, participant) may see in the image of the goddess the *pēy* (cf. Vallāla myth), he may be reminded of the loss of a child, the image may also provoke a feeling of devotion, the image may simply create a particular *mood* in the devotee, etc. The problem the 'visitor' or researcher faces when he tries to decipher the symbol or image or to extract the meaning of the ritual is not only that he lacks certain tools (e.g., the direct experience of participation etc.), but also that the one who does possess these tools (the participant, the performer) is to a large extent unable to communicate

[1] Geertz (1968), p. 29.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 8 ff.

the experience with which the tools provide him. Why this is so is clear: the performer, participant does not ask questions about his *mood*, about the symbols, about the meaning of the ritual; the symbols, the ritual, maybe even his *moods* are part of his tradition, hence accepted, i.e., they are rarely thought about as something to be analyzed, questioned.

When we ask the informant why he performs the ritual he will say, 'because it is our tradition' (*paramparai*, Skt. *paramparā*); upon further questioning he might cite one or the other myth in explanation for the performance of the ritual, or he will even go so far as to say that the ritual 'strengthens' the goddess, gives her the power to protect her devotees (Mad.Gu.).

In order to address ourselves to the question of the meaning (of the core rituals) it will be useful to distinguish between

a. why are the core rituals performed at all, what are the benefits (for the performer, participant), what kind of beliefs are supported, re-asserted by the rituals; i.e., what is the purpose of the rituals, and

b. what is the meaning of the particular pattern (of the core rituals), what beliefs or what 'reality' has shaped the ritual(s), in what relation stand the elements to each other, (i.e., apart from having a meaning in themselves, do they have a meaning in relation to each other)?[1]

We do not have any historical data about the core rituals, but we have variations on the performance which show up developments; we do not have informants' statements on the meaning of the rituals - myths aside, but we do know how the individual elements are perceived by the informants and we do know to some extent what (at least) the material benefits are of the rituals; what we know very little or nothing about, is what kind of beliefs shaped the rituals (b.) and what effect the rituals have on the devotee and how they (may) re-assert his view of the world (a.). To reconstruct an 'original' pattern for the core rituals, to find the beliefs which could have been at the basis of these rituals, we can to some extent rely on the myths, on the performance of the rituals and on what the informants expressed about the elements themselves, and we can supplement this information with references from other sources. The result of our investigation, however, can be nothing more than a hypothesis. We shall first explore meaning b. since a. can then be explained in terms of b. But before

[1] This distinction was inspired by Geertz's *model of* and *model for* concept. Geertz (1968), p. 7 ff.

we delve into the meaning of the core rituals, a few general remarks need to be made.

We have seen that the myths rarely correspond to the patterns of the rituals. If Rāma can be made responsible for the annual creation of Mācāṇiyamman in the cremation ground (Anai. - the permanent place of Mācāṇiyamman, i.e., her temple, is not considered to be in the cremation ground), any other equally illustrious personage could supply the fabric for a myth involving the goddess in the cremation ground. The Rāma myth aside, the other two myths do have some relevance to the ritual in that they furnish considerable information about the elements of the ritual and to a certain extent about the performance itself, but they cannot be the cause of the rituals because if this were so, we should expect a greater consistency between myth and rituals and we would not be able to explain why the rituals do well without the myths (of course one could argue that the myth has been forgotten, but it seems unlikely that all the *pūcāri* around the Madurai area have a bad memory). The myth can exert some influence on the representational level of the element, but not on the ritual performance level, since in the latter the myth is the accommodating party. For example, the heads of the *kapparai* can be named after the guards of Vallāla's fort (Kuppucci., Mutta.), but instead of dispensing with the figure in the cremation ground, the figure is incorporated into the myth (Valpettai). Unlike the Vedic *śrauta* ritual, which according to Heesterman 'presents a highly rationalized system of abstract symbols..' and which aims at 'a divorce from the world of concrete reality',[1] the rituals under discussion here seem to point out, in very concrete terms, a reality which man is forced to face. No attempt is made in the core rituals to gloss over the hideous, to eschew realities of life the way they present themselves to man; on the contrary, I would maintain that one of the core rituals' functions is precisely to portray a reality and to offer a means by which man can 'deal' with that reality (see below). Certainly the rituals have undergone, to various degrees, a process of 'purification', but they have not been altered thereby in the sense of an abstration, rather they have been transformed in such a way as to leave the intended meaning intact (as far as possible), substituting that which was considered unacceptable ('impure') with its equivalent ('pure') symbol. Further, the performance of the core rituals is, to some extent, fluid, that is, although certain rules and regulations during the performance are strictly adhered to in each individual case (e.g., the rules of 'purity' where they exist), others are not always rigidly observed (e.g., the auspicious moment or time -

[1] Heesterman (1967), p. 22 ff.

mukūrttam, Skt. *muhūrta* - is sometimes missed). There seem to be no overall exact rules pertaining either to the form of the elements (e.g., the *kapparai* may be made of winnowing fans, wood, metal, have one or three faces, etc.) or to the time of the performance (and the time of the festival).

1. Meaning of the pattern (b.)

As we have seen above, what is a great divergence on the representational level of the elements (*kapparai*, figure in the cremation ground), is a convergence on the essential level. The *kapparai* has the nature of a hungry 'evil' spirit, while the figure in the cremation ground acts like the food for that 'evil' spirit. Various informants pointed out that the goddess eats dead bodies. The ritual as performed by the *pūcāri* of the Madurai (Mad.Gu.) temple makes this clear: the *kapparai*, which represents Aṅkāḷammaṉ (and the four other deities), is brought to the cremation ground in order to be offered the food which Aṅkāḷammaṉ especially likes, i.e., dead bodies (this act is ritually symbolized by removing a small piece of bone from a burning body which the *pūcāri*, possessed by the gods, will chew). The *pūcāri* stated that if the gods are not offered this kind of food once a year, they will not protect his family. This pattern: a (basically malevolent) spirit eats a dead body in the cremation ground and thereby is changed into a benevolent spirit, makes sense in so far as the *kapparai* can on all accounts be compared to a spirit regardless what name is assigned it; where this pattern runs into difficulties, however, is at the representational level of the figure in the cremation ground. If the figure represents a dead body, how can it be identified with the same goddess who is the spirit (*kapparai*), e.g., Vāḷācāpāṭ: the figure is Pārvatī, the goddess who eats dead bodies. Not only that, but the figure fulfills two functions, being on the one hand, equated with the dead body, while on the other, with a pregnant woman from whom the foetus is removed. If we take this into consideration and translate it onto the ritual plane, we arrive at the following: A spirit (goddess) goes to the cremation ground, removes the foetus from a (dead) body (which is that spirit's own body) and eats the foetus (or body), thereby satisfying its own longing. Is this what the rituals portray, and how can such a statement make any kind of sense?

In the Vallāḷa myth the goddess is mistaken for a *pēy* (or *picācu*) because she behaves like one. In *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (371.22 ff) we read how the female spirit (*pēymakaḷ*) with her white teeth, which are like the tusks of a boar, chews and savours the white fat mixed with meat (taken from the dead bodies on the battlefield) and garlands herself with the intestines (*kuṭarttalai*

mālai cūṭi).[1] In the *Cilappatikāram*[2] we read about a young woman who snatches the dead boy from Mālati's arm, makes her way in the dark towards the cremation ground where she gives the child to Iṭākiṉippēy (the *pēy* called Iṭākiṉi) who eats dead bodies (*iṭupiṇan tiṉṉum iṭākiṉippēy*). Aṅkāḷamman and her substitute, Pēcci (Pēcci is also one of the fostermothers of Cuṭalaimāṭacāmi, she eats corpses and children and is often depicted as eating an infant[3]), share their tastes with those of the *pēy*. Other goddesses of greater or lesser fame can join their company: e.g., Brahmarākṣasī, the other fostermother of Cuṭalaimāṭaṉ, or Isakki - once a concubine of a Brahmin who was killed by him for her treachery and who, as a beautiful girl, entices men and women and brings them misery - she too eats infants.[4] The famous Calcutta Kālī, Kālikā and Cāmuṇḍā are known to relish human flesh. These goddesses often live in the cremation ground (the place haunted by *pēy*); Kāṭamar celvi's temple is in the cremation ground,[5] and the *Kaliṅkattup paraṇi* relates that, among other things, the corpse, the *pēy* and the cremation ground surround the temple of Kāḷi (*piṇamum pēyum cuṭukāṭum*).[6] The *pēy* have a tremendous hunger[7] and they are pictured as possessing large mouths.[8] The *pēy* do not confine their attacks to corpses; a popular Tamil belief is that: 'Ghosts will chase, kill and suck the blood of those who go out alone'.[9] Pregnant women and small children are especially susceptible to the harmful assaults of the *pēy*: 'By the Tiyans of Malabar [toddy tappers] a number of evil spirits are supposed to devote their attention to a pregnant woman, and to suck the blood of the child *in utero*, and of the mother.'[10] Women, much more than men, are exposed to the influence of all kinds of spirits[11] because they find themselves more often in a liminal state (menstruation, pregnancy),

[1] See also above, 5.1. Cf. *Cilappatikāram, Kālkōṭ kātai*, 2o5 ff., (1968), p. 539, it describes how the *pēy*'s hair soaks in the blood of dead warriors.

[2] *Kaṉāttiṟamuraitta kātai*, 15 ff., (1968), p. 24O. (I am grateful to Dr. Sarasvati Venugopal for this reference). Cf. *Maṇimēkalai*, ch. 6, *cakkaravāḷakkōṭṭam*, 11 (*pēykkūttu*), (1976), p. 84.

[3] Pate (Tinnevelli Distr. Gazetteer) (1917), p. 115.

[4] Hornell (1944), p. 82.

[5] *Maṇimēkalai*, ch. 6 (*Palvēṟu kōṭṭaṅkaḷ*), (1976), p. 79.

[6] *Kaliṅkattup paraṇi*, ch. 4, 12O. Cf. Ingalls (1972), p. 282 ff.

[7] *Kaliṅkattup paraṇi*, ch. 4, 113.4 (*uṟuperumpaci*)

[8] *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 356, l. 2 (*pēḻvāy*).

[9] Shanmugam Pillai/Claus (1981), p. 77 (No. 59).

[10] Thurston (1912), p. 246.

[11] *ibid.*, p. 238.

a state which facilitates the contact with those forces from which the person in an integrated state is protected.[1] 'Delayed puberty, permanent sterility, and still-births, are not uncommon ills of a devil-possessed woman.'[2] A Tamil informant stated that women get more easily possessed by *pēy, picācu* than men and he attributed this to women's weakness (of mind - *maṉam*) and men's courage.[3] Small children, until they are considered fully incorporated in society, have to be protected from malevolent spirits and this is often done by placing an especially degrading object near the child: 'Until a child is six months old, or until it starts eating cooked rice, if sandals or a broom are put at its left side it won't be bothered by ghosts.'[4]

A number of malevolent spirits are thought to be the spirits of those people who did not die a natural and peaceful death. The spirits or souls of such people cannot take their place in the abode of ancestors, but linger in a liminal state between heaven and earth. These spirits can be dangerous because they cannot be controlled unless they are given a 'place to stay', i.e., are integrated into a system which makes it possible to regulate their power by fulfilling their desires. A Tamil belief (and one probably found all over India) is that 'those who commit suicide and those who die before they should, will wander like ghosts.'[5] The idea that a person should ideally lead a complete life, one which leads the person to a state of harmony in which there are no more desires to be fulfilled, may be one of the aspects inherent in the concept of the *varṇāśramas* (four stages in life) and the *saṃskāras* (rites of passage). Unfulfilled desires will prevent the soul of the departed from reaching the world of the ancestors, just as they will hinder a person from dying a peaceful death. A prolonged struggle with death is thought to be the cause of unfulfilled wishes. In Tamilnadu a custom exists to satisfy the dying man's desires by giving him: '*maṇ* (earth), *poṉ* (gold) and *peṇ* (woman)'.[6] A Brahmarākṣasa is popularly believed to be the spirit of a

[1] That women in their liminal states are especially vulnerable and in danger of being harmed by the power of the deity may have been the underlying idea in forbidding menstruating women to enter the temple or sight of the deity. Cf. statements made by informants (ch. III, A.5.3).

[2] Thurston (1912), p. 238.

[3] Mdr.Cinta., informant (2).

[4] Shanmugam Pillai/Claus (1981), p. 79 (No. 75).

[5] *ibid.*, p. 77 (No. 52).

[6] A bit of earth from the man's land or home town and a small amount of gold are mixed in milk and a *tāli* (wedding chain) is dipped into the milk and the milk given him to drink. (Personal communication by Dr. A. Dhamotharan).

Brahmin who died without having fulfilled his wishes.[1] Children who at their death were not properly integrated in the society of the living and persons for whom the necessary funeral rites (which establish them in the world of the ancestors) could not be performed are liable to molest (as spirits) those on earth.[2] These spirits are essentially different from the benevolent spirits, e.g., the properly integrated ancestor spirits. The distinction between basically benevolent and basically malevolent spirits is clearly made by tribal societies (whereby, of course, not all spirits are satisfied or unsatisfied ancestor spirits). The benevolent (life-giving or life-sustaining) spirits generally dwell in or near the house or in a cultivated area, whereas the malevolent (life-destroying) spirits roam about in cremation grounds, uncultivated areas or unfamiliar, rarely frequented places.[3]

It is difficult to draw a clear line between what constitutes a spirit and what constitutes a deity. Certainly the distinction between the two cannot be based solely on the issue of benevolence or malevolence.[4] However, one can distinguish between two different types of power. The spirit can be defined as a power which is unpredictable, and neither clearly defined, named nor established, a power that, in short, has not been brought under control and is generally destructive, while the deity has the opposite characteristics, with the exception that the deity is capable of being a combination of both the destructive and the creative, potentially both benevolent and malevolent. What distinguishes the *pēy* from Pēcci is that the *pēy* is considered to be destructive, governed by uncontrollable desires and imbued with a power which is earth-directed (i.e., the spirit's sphere of influence is limited to the world of men because the spirit is in a permanent liminal state); whereas the goddess (Pēcci) may be thought of as not only possessing a creative intelligence which enables her to direct her power but also as partaking of both the world of men and the world of gods.

[1] In Crooke (1894), p. 233, the 'Brahma Rākṣasa' is described as black, wearing entrails, 'gnawing the flesh of a man's head and drinking blood out of a skull.' He has 'formidable tusks, flaming hair, and insatiable hunger.'

[2] Cf. Van Gennep (1960), p. 160.

[3] Cf. Vidyarthi/Mann (1981); especially the contributions of A. Das Gupta (on the Ho), p. 41 ff; R.K. Sinha (on the Pando), p. 69 ff. and S.G. Morab (on the Soliga), p. 127 ff. Notice the number of 21 gods or spirits (Das Gupta and Sinha) which, in the case of the Pando, are considered to be malevolent, disease-bringing spirits. It would be tempting to see a parallel in these and the 21 gods of Southern Tamilnadu.

[4] Benevolent spirits can turn malevolent when they are not propitiated and malevolent spirits turn benevolent when propitiated.

That the goddess Aṅkāḷammaṉ (and her *avatāram*, Pēcci) has evolved from a *pēy* is suggested by her tastes (dead bodies and children) and by her dwelling place, the cremation ground. Exactly how and at what point in historical time a transformation from *pēy* to goddess could have taken place, we do not know. Elmore[1] recorded many examples of how the spirit of someone who died an unnatural death was turned into a deity. Whether or not the cult of Aṅkāḷammaṉ developed along similar lines as those described by Elmore, cannot be proven; there is no myth which makes Aṅkāḷammaṉ a human who died a violent death, but what can be assumed, with reasonable certainty, is that the core rituals must express a very old and elaborate propitiation ceremony addressed to a particularly dangerous spirit or force. One can even go so far as to conjecture what type of spirit this was or is. The goddess' association with childbirth and fertility, coupled with the ritual imagery and action, plus the rather obvious statement made by the Vallāḷa myth, point to a pregnant woman as the original source of the spirit. The spirit of a woman who died during pregnancy or in child-birth is believed to be very malignant: '... it is firmly believed that if a woman dies during pregnancy or in childbed, her spirit becomes an exceedingly malignant ghost, and haunts the precincts of the village where she dies,' writes E. Thurston in connection with the Paṟaiyaṉs.[2] The Baiga have a similar belief: 'When a pregnant woman dies or a woman dies in childbirth, she becomes a *churelin*, 'like a black vulture with great wings and peahen's feet turned backwards, for ever crying Kai-O'.'[3] This *churelin* or *churel*, known in various parts of Northern India, is very much dreaded and thought to be 'particularly malignant to her own family.'[4] There are various practices which are supposed to prevent the dead pregnant woman from becoming a *churel* or malignant spirit. What seems to be vital is that the child be removed from her body before she is either buried or burned.[5] What the consequences are, if the woman does turn into a spirit, we gather from the following Tamil folk belief: 'A great famine will come to the place where a pregnant woman who has died is buried without having her child removed from her.'[6] The spirit withholds

[1] Elmore (1925), p. 34 ff., p. 59 ff.

[2] Thurston (1909 C&T), vol. VI, 'Paraiyan', p. 102.

[3] Elwin (1939), p. 295.

[4] Crooke (1894), p. 168.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 170. Crooke mentions only burial, but according to Dr. A. Dhamotharan, the woman can also be burned (after the child has been removed).

[6] Shanmugam Pillai/Claus (1981), p. 76 (No. 42)

that which she herself was denied to give: food. The very purpose of her existence, i.e., to bear and nourish her children, was taken from her by death, or by a spirit like the one she herself has turned into now. Not only pregnant women, but also newly born (children) turn into malevolent spirits: 'The Bhuiyârs ... say that little baby girls who die before they are twenty days old become *churels*.'[1] Kālī becomes her 'demonic' self (the leader of ghosts, the dweller of the Vindhya mountain, the eater of flesh etc.) after being killed in her form as new-born girl by the evil Kaṃsa.[2] Pregnant women and young children especially have to be guarded against malignant spirits, while women who died in pregnancy or while giving birth and infants who died shortly after birth, turn into malignant spirits. These spirits do not exclusively attack their living counterparts (other pregnant women and small children), but if one considers the fact that it is not death alone which is the cause for the malignancy of these spirits, but that the malignancy is mainly the result of these spirits' desires to fulfill the wishes which for them remained unsatisfied, and further, their desires to take revenge by depriving others of that which they never had,[3] one can reasonably assume that at least some of these malignant spirits from which the women and children have to be protected are exactly the type of spirits which they would turn into should they die and not somehow be provided with a proper funeral. For instance, the *churel* of the Pando are female spirits who attack children.[4]

Let us now consider the performance of the core rituals. The *kapparai*, as *piramakapālam*, is the spirit of a Brahmin (man or woman) who died a violent death, it is a goddess, at times with three faces,[5] the flesh-eating guard of Vallāla's fort, or some Asura. The *kapparai* is infused with life by the sacrifice of a goat or chicken. The person who carries the *kapparai* has to be strong, because the *kapparai* has such a power that it

[1] Crooke (1894), p. 169. Cf. Arbman (1922), p. 232, fn. 1.:'Seelen solcher [nicht ausgetragener] Kinder wurden also als blutdürstige Dämonen vorgestellt.'

[2] O'Flaherty (1980-Myths), p. 205 ff. (citing *Harivaṃśa*).

[3] Cf. e.g., Kosambi (1962), p. 108; Jain (1973), p. 24: 'Man nimmt an, dass Frauen, die gestorben sind, ohne Kinder zu haben, oder Frauen, die zu Lebzeiten einen grossen unerfüllten Wunsch hatten, zu einer *cudel* werden... Man kann eine *cudel* beim Verbrennungsplatz oder an verlassenen Orten antreffen... Eine *cudel* lebt nicht im Körper anderer Menschen, sondern sie verübt Böses, indem sie von aussen her wirkt.'

[4] Vidyarthi/Mann (1981) - R.K. Sinha, p. 69 ff. (The Pando are a tribe in Madhya Pradesh).

[5] Dutt Shastri (1967), p. 541; (*Agnipurāṇa*): on a piece of cloth, worn by a dead man, the 3 terrifying faces of the goddess (Mahāmāri or Kālī) should be painted - these faces will annihilate the enemy and his troops.

might carry him off. (The *pūcāri* of the Madurai (Mad.Gu.) temple maintained that in the olden days - when there was no electricity - chains were tied around his waist and two men had to hold the chains on each side and he, the *pūcāri*, would be lifted up from the ground, as he went to the cremation ground with the *kapparai*.)[1] The *kapparai* is taken to the cremation ground and there placed at the head of the figure or body. The *pūcāri* (or another person) who carries the *kapparai* is not dressed in female clothes. With a few exceptions, the *kapparai* is brought to the cremation ground at around midnight, on a new-moon night, that is, at the darkest possible time.[2] Night is the time when spirits[3] and goddesses (especially malevolent ones)[4] wander about, it is the time when the Rākṣasas surface from below the earth 'to ensnare men',[5] the time when the fishes turn into Rākṣasas to harass the gods (myth 11; at midnight Aṅkāḷamman turned into a termite hill - myth 10), and night is the time when spirits are exorcised.[6]

The *kapparai* acts as a carrier for the spirit which has to be appeased. Through the blood sacrifice, the spirit is called into the *kapparai*, it takes hold of it and the person who carries it;[7] it makes its way to the cremation ground (or one can presume that in the early days of the cult there was no temple and the spirit was called into the *kapparai* in the cremation ground itself - the *kapparai*'s function could have been to single out one particular spirit among the many which haunt the cremation ground, namely, the one represented by the *kapparai*), where it is propitiated with a sacrifice, after which it will leave the *kapparai*. The blood-rice which is thrown up into the air will keep other spirits busy, preventing them

[1] i.e., he was carried by the power of the *kapparai*. The electricity, he said, interferes with the power. Cf. Whitehead (1976), p. 62: the Mādigā who carries the head of the buffalo has to be held by ropes to prevent him from being carried off by malignant spirits. Cf. also Brubaker (1979), p. 128 ff, at: 136 and 139.

[2] On the new moon (*amāvāsyā*) cf. Merrey (1982), p. 16: though it is 'inauspicious' and 'partakes of the character of darkness, it is also the harbinger of light and marks the beginning of the bright fortnight.' Cf. Diehl (1956), p. 166: 'The newmoon day gives success in matters of wife and children....' (from: *Cittānta Caiva Viṉāviṭai*).

[3] Cf. Arbman (1922), p. 58, 59, 125, 180, 182, 185.

[4] Cf. Shanmugam Pillai/Claus (1981), p. 78 (No. 69): 'Some think one should not go out at night because one will see evil goddesses.'

[5] O'Flaherty (1976), p. 87, quoting W. Norman Brown, p. 98 'The Creation Myth of the Rg Veda', in JAOS 62 (1942), p. 85-98.

[6] Elmore (1925), p. 52

[7] Cf. Valpt., Perum.

from following the *pūcāri* and his party back from the cremation ground.[1] A similar preventative measure is not to look back when leaving the cremation ground[2] (a custom which is also observed after a funeral). The *kapparai* is destroyed, it has served its function.

What kind of sacrifice is offered to this spirit depends on how much the performer of the ritual considers the elements (of the ritual) as connected or separate (see above). In the case of Mēl Malaiyanūr, sheep,[3] arrack, betel and fruits (Thurston) were offered to the *kapparai*. Following this, a new offering was made to the five conical heaps of cremation ground ashes (representing Gaṇeśa); these offerings included bangles and parts of the human body made of rice-flour. These things would be carried off by people who, possessed, would eat part of corpses. It is unlikely that Gaṇeśa would find pleasure in receiving bangles and in eating parts of human bodies,[4] and one can assume that the offerings were once meant for Aṅkāḷamman. In any case, the ritual here does not include the *pillaippāvu*, and the spirit's main food seems to be human bodies.

Similar things, which in Mēl Malaiyanūr were piled up in a heap, are placed on the figure in the cremation ground in Vālājāpettai. They include bangles, among other items used by a woman. The food (gram, sweet potato) - the whole *pūcai* - is meant for the *piramātti*, i.e., the *kapparai* (five heads of Brahmā). Instead of waiting for the spirit to descend (myth), the food offerings are thrown up into the air. After this, the devotees will rip apart the figure and take from it whatever they can. Here, it is not only the *kapparai* which goes to the cremation ground. The goddess herself is present during the *kollai*. She sits at the place of the *kapparai*, at the head of the figure. Even if the identification between *kapparai* and goddess is not made (by informants), the goddess takes an active part in the ritual (her passive role being that of the figure). When the food offerings are

[1] Cf. also Whitehead (1976), p. 94.

[2] Cf. Whitehead (1976), p. 103 and 104.

[3] More likely they were goats; *āṭu* can mean either sheep or goat (but I have never heard of any sheep being sacrificed for this goddess.)

[4] Although seen in the light of what was said above (5.2. *kāval*) the latter offering to him would not seem totally out of place.

thrown into the air, some women whose wish for a child was fulfilled, will throw a representation of their child or their child into the air, an offering to the spirit.[1] The spirit then is one who also grants children. As in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, it eats dead bodies and it falls over the figure which represents a woman, a married woman,[2] said to be the goddess herself.

In Āṉaimalai, the person possessed by the goddess falls onto the figure, destroys it and takes away its life (*uyir*) which is then placed into the pot and brought to the goddess in the temple. In Vālācāpāt, the *pūcāri*, possessed by the frenzy of the goddess (!), is thrown onto the figure by the *kapparai*; he then picks up the ashes from the figure's stomach. In Viḻuppuram, Kāḷi (after eating a handful of ashes from a cremated body) falls onto the figure (the queen) and pulls out the intestines. She places them into the winnowing fan. (Here the *kapparai* is Aṅkāḷammaṉ). According to the *pūcāri* of the Kurunātaṉ temple (Maturai), in the olden days people who got possessed would rip open the stomach of corpses in the cremation ground and eat their intestines and liver. In another temple (Tamp.), the intestines and liver are eaten by Aṅkāḷammaṉ. In the winnowing fan there is a small doll made of flour, and there is, in some cases, either the foetus, extracted from a pregnant goat (Per., Kuppucci), or a goat's liver. In other words, what is removed from the belly of the married woman (the figure) are not only her intestines, but also her child.

The winnowing fan and winnowing basket, like the broom and sandals, are considered to be 'unclean'; for instance, it is a great insult to be hit with any of these.[3] Like the broom and sandals,[4] the winnowing fan or basket is thought to be effective against malignant spirits and offerings made to these spirits are often placed in them.[5] A custom also exists

[1] Cf. the story of the king who vowed to offer his son to the god, should one be born to him, quoted by Joshi (1893), p. 279, from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.

[2] A string of black beads worn around the neck is also a sign of married status; the *kuṅkumam* powder is for the *poṭṭu*, a sign of marriage. Cf. Bhattacharyya (1977), p. 9: 'Widows and virgins cannot use it [vermilion] because they are not entitled to procreate.'

[3] These conventions can effectively be reversed: Cāṅgadeva Rāuḷ, the third *avatāra* worshipped by the Mahānubhāv sect, transmitted his *śakti* to Govinda Prabhu (Guṇḍam Rāuḷ) by placing a winnowing fan on his head and hitting it with a broom. (Information from a lecture delivered in Heidelberg, 1983, by Prof. S.G. Tulpule, Pune. (Vi. Bhi. Kolate, ed., *LĪḶĀcaritra*, Mumbai, 1978, *līḷā* 15.)

[4] See above, Shanmugam Pillai/Claus (1981), p. 79 (No. 75).

[5] Thurston (1912), p. 92, 292-293.

(in Eastern U.P.) of placing the newly born child into a winnowing basket.[1] In Tamilnadu, if a woman has lost two or three children in a row, she will take a winnowing fan, (often) put the representation of a child made of flour in it and with it go begging for rice from door to door, usually on a Saturday. She may do this until she gets pregnant again.[2] The idea behind this may be the woman's vow to 'offer' her next child to a deity (to assure that deity's protection). The *pillaippāvu* ritual seemingly has the same function. The goddess is appeased with the offering of a child, she will become benevolent and grant other women their children. While the goddess has the child (or foetus) in the winnowing fan in her hand, women pour milk over it which they then drink; they profit from the sacrifice by sharing the offering in the form of *piracātam*, thereby hoping to get children themselves.

Who is the 'victim' of this sacrifice, who is the pregnant woman whose child is dedicated to Aṅkāḷamman̲? It is possible that this ritual once involved the sacrifice of a pregnant woman or, perhaps, the offering of a human foetus.[3] The only possible support for the assumption of a human sacrifice is the practice described by the informant of Kuṉṉattūr, namely, that four heads used to be offered to the goddess, one among them the head of a human (acquired at the cremation ground from the figure); or the human head (or skull) placed as the figure's head in Muttaṇampālaiyam (i.e., the head is an offering to the goddess).[4] More to the point than trying to guess whether there was once actually a real human sacrifice will be to find out how it can be understood that, in many cases, the sacrificial victim is the goddess herself.

[1] Srivastava (1974), p. 71-72.

[2] It is called *caṉikkiḻamai viratam* (Saturday vow or fast). Personal communication by Dr. A. Dhamotharan. For the same reason, a *pūcāri* can be paid money to perform the *pillaippāvu* (Amur, Muc.).

[3] Pregnant women did get sacrificed to some goddesses. Cf. Thurston (1912), p. 222-223: the sacrificed woman's 'abdomen was torn open, and the foetus removed therefrom, and dedicated to the evil spirit.' Both incidents of a pregnant woman being sacrificed in order to make the temple car of Kāñcīpuram move are recorded on copper-plate grants, believed to be forgeries (Thurston). Cf. Madras Journal of Literature and Science, No. 22, Jan. 1839; 5. Report of Progress made in the Examination of the *Mackenzie MSS*, with an Abstract Account of the Works examined by the Rev. William Taylor, April 1839 (Tamil MSS), p. 360 ff. 'Account of the fane of Panniyanna-naru-cavu Bhagavati near to Manar, in the district of Tiruvalla:' Yearly a woman pregnant with her first child was sacrificed to this deity (through beheading). This until 1743.

[4] See also Kuppucci., the *pūcāri*'s statement that the goddess had to offer a human sacrifice to the guards of Vallāḷarājaṉ's fort.

If we consider the *mayāṉakkollai* and the *pillaippāvu* to be two separate rituals, we could assume that the figure in the cremation ground evolved from the dead body and was later identified with the goddess or a god, regardless of its original role. By combining it with the *pillaippāvu* and the Vallāla myth, the figure could have received the role of the goddess to whom the child is offered (in this case the figure would not be destroyed, cf. Coimbatore), or the role of the queen or that of Vallālarāja̲n, the latter two again the victim of the goddess (i.e., their destruction would be justified). If we take the two rituals to be one, the figure would have represented a pregnant woman from the start, but later have come to be associated with the goddess or a god, etc. In either case however, the goddess has, in the end, become the victim; in the first case, the dead body, in the second case the pregnant woman, where the dead body could also be that of a pregnant woman.[1]

When we compare the *kapparai* with the figure, we find that the *kapparai*'s sex is much less clearly defined than that of the figure. The *kapparai* can be totally male, or female or a combination of both. Like the termite hill from which male and female demons emerge to swallow the ditch diggers, the *kapparai* combines the male and female. It consists of a head or heads, hungry and dangerous ones. These bodiless heads are the ones which demand a sacrifice, they are the demon which the goddess crushes under her foot. The figure, however, is predominantly female. This is especially striking where the figure has become permanent, Macāṉiyamma̲n, the mother of the cremation ground. In Vālāntūr, despite its identification with a male god, the figure is female, nude. When the figure is decorated, it is with yellow or red cloth or saris (i.e., of auspicious color[2]), with flower garlands, bangles, etc. Surrounding her are her children who also act as guards, keeping off any negative disturbances. Sacrifices are offered to this goddess: a black pig, a black goat and a black chicken, the pig being the most important of the three.[3] Sometimes all three animals, but especially

[1] I was told that the *pūcāri* of one Aṅkāḷamma̲n temple in Madurai during the ritual eats the bones of the recently cremated body of a Brahmin girl who died in her ninth month of pregnancy. The source of the information is a person who claimed to have seen this. I tried to check the information with the *pūcāri* of that temple, but was not able to, since he was always ill and refused to speak to anyone.

[2] During the cremation ground ritual in Āṉaimalai, it was pointed out to me that I should not have worn a sari with a black pattern. Perhaps, black was considered an inauspicious color for this occasion. In some temples Aṅkāḷamma̲n is dressed in black (e.g., in Vēḷukuṭi - Tanjavur distr.). Persons who worship this particular goddess as *kula teyvam* will avoid the color black in clothes and other things. (Information by Mr. M. Kannan, Putukōṭṭai).

[3] Sometimes only the pig is offered (Iru., Orrai., Kovai). The pig is nowadays replaced by the *pūcaṉikkāy*.

the pig's head has to open its mouth to show that it eats the rice offering placed before it; this is taken as a sign that the goddess accepts the sacrifice. Though the pig is not offered exclusively to goddesses, its value as a sacrifice is above that of the goat or chicken, and it is therefore often sacrificed to important or powerful spirits or deities.[1]

According to Beck, the figure made in Kāṅkaya nāṭu is that of a pregnant female. This seems to be an exception. Nevertheless, the idea that the figure ought to represent a pregnant woman is not only suggested by the myth, but by the lying position of the figure, by its exaggerated femininity and, of course, by its functional value, which is primarily to induce fertility. The ashes from this figure are eaten by devotees if pregnancy is desired, they are buried in the fields for a good yield. The latter finds its parallel in the well-known Meriah sacrifice.[2] That the dead are, so to speak, the seed from which new life grows and that they are intimately linked with fertility was, or is, a belief prevalent in many cultures.[3]

Aṅkāḷamman, as we have pointed out, is ambivalent, both malevolent and benevolent. The malevolent aspect of the goddess is symbolized by the *kapparai*: she causes harm to pregnant women, to children, she brings diseases of the mind and body, she is hungry and angry, she eats her victims. The benevolent aspect of the goddess is symbolized in the figure: she offers her own body, her own life for the life of her devotees, she provides them with the means to ward off all the dangers which she herself is, in her unsatisfied state. She is the womb from which all life issues. She is the food for her alter ego; what the spirit lacks and demands, she gives: the child. The goddess perpetuates herself, without a male, she becomes pregnant by eating her own children which she then bears and offers to life only in the end to eat them again in her form as death.

[1] For instance: The Coorg 'chief ancestor's' higher status is denoted by the sacrifice of a pig to him, see Srinivas (1952), p. 158. Cf. Thurston (1912): The Kondhs sacrifice a pig in the purification ceremony for a man killed by a tiger (p. 56); cf., p. 165. Pigs are sacrificed when a Savara of Ganjam is killed by a tiger (p. 189). A pig is sacrificed during the Meriah ritual of the Khond (p. 201). The Baiga offer black pigs, black chickens and black goats to Dharti Mata (mother earth), cf. Elwin (1939), p. 58.

[2] Cf. Thurston (1906), p. 510 ff., and Boal (1979), p. 88 ff., at 91 ff.

[3] Cf. Eliade (1974), p. 349 ff. Cf. Das (1982), p. 101: 'It is stated in the Grihya Sutra that during the ancestor propitiation rituals the *pinda* offered to the grandfather of the householder should be eaten by his (householder's) wife if she is desirous of a son.' Cf. O'Flaherty (1980), p. 5-6.

The cremation ground is *the* place where life and death are continually exchanged. By extension, it is the *vana*, the place where transformations take place, where deities are created and come from,[1] it is the place of man's final journey on earth, whether he be the *saṃnyāsin* who, at the end of his life, seeks *moksa* or whether he be the man who through the funerary rites is changed into an ancestor.

The character of Aṅkāḷamman, as brought out by the core rituals, is very reminiscent of that of Kālī. She shares with Kālī her dwelling place, her terrifying nature, her 'unsavory' tastes. During Kālī *pūjā* in Calcutta one can often see wild looking figures with dishevelled hair and holding bones in their hands set up in front of Kālī shrines. A Kāḷi temple adjacent to the Tiruvāṉaikkā temple in Tirucciṟāppaḷḷi shows, above its entrance, a figure of Kāḷi in the process of ripping open the stomach of an Asura.[2]

Though Kālī, like other goddesses, is not as a rule depicted with a child in her womb, the idea itself seems to be very much alive, as for instance in Cucīntiram, where the image underlies the topographical dimensions of the temple and the town (see photo).[3] The double aspect of the goddess who both bears and swallows her children is well illustrated in a passage quoted by Kinsley:[4]

> 'Ramakrishna once had a vision of māyā. In this vision he saw a beautiful young woman, pregnant and about to give birth, emerging from the Ganges. She lay down on the bank and soon gave birth to a son. She suckled him and caressed him fondly. Suddenly she was transformed into a terrible hag. She grasped the infant, crushed him in her mighty jaws, and returned into the water of the Ganges.'

Just as the individual elements (of the core rituals) in relation to each other can be seen as a whole, containing positive and negative, so is each element itself characterized by opposing forces which melt into a unity. This is especially evident in the *kapparai*: on the one hand, it is the *piramātti* or an Asura, a destructive force, but on the other hand, it is

[1] Sontheimer, The *vana* and the *kṣetra*.

[2] According to the tailor, who has his shop next to this temple, Kāḷi is Akilāṇṭēcuvari's guard. Kāḷi killed the Asura because he molested the two goddesses while they were bathing. This Kāḷi temple as well as a few others in Tamilnadu where I inquired do not celebrate a ritual in the cremation ground.

[3] I am grateful to Dr. Jan Pieper for letting me use this picture. Dr. Pieper drew this picture according to the instructions of Dr. N.P. Sharma, Vattappalli Sthanikar, Śri Sthanumalayaswami Temple, Cucīntiram. Dr. Sharma thinks that the goddess may represent *lokamātā* who bears the world (or the universe) in her womb. I also thank Prof. Dr. K. Fischer who showed the picture during his lecture in Heidelberg in 1983.

[4] Kinsley (1975), p. 134, quoting from the *Gospel of Ramakrishna*, p. 21-22.

Brahmā, the god who creates, the Trimūrti - an image which not only encompasses the bipolar forces but also their transcendence.

A word should be said about the food stuff which is thrown into the air. Apart from the *kolukkattai*, practically all of the fruits, vegetables or plants used during the core rituals can in one way or another be interpreted as meaningful in the context of what was said above. I am fully aware of the arbitrariness of such interpretations, nevertheless, one should not totally discount the fact that the popular beliefs about some of these 'plants' revolve around 'evil spirits' or pregnancy and that the medicinal properties of others relate to the region of the abdomen - a domain which is very much the goddess' concern.

Margosa or Nim (*Melia azadirachta*) is known for its cooling and general healing properties; it is especially effective in cases of skin disease.'A decoction of the leaves also is administered with great benefit in intermittent fevers complicated with congestion of the liver.' 'A soup of the leaves' is good 'for convalescence after diarrhoea.'[1] It is a popular belief (in Tamilnadu) that margosa leaves can protect pregnant women against 'evil spirits' and these leaves are also used in rituals of exorcism.[2]

Tamarind (*Tamarindus Indica*). Unripe tamarind fruit is 'highly acid.' The pulp of the ripe fruit is 'cooling, carminative, digestive and laxative a valuable antiscorbutic and antibilious.'[3] The ripe fruit seems effective against problems located in the liver, stomach and intestines. 'Acid exhalation from the foliage of the tamarind tree is injurious to health, on this account peasants rarely sleep under it.'[4] When a pregnant woman feels like eating something sour, she will be given tamarind. In northern Tamilnadu the term *pulikutittal* ('drinking of tamarind') means 'giving birth'.[5]

About the drumstick (*muruṅkaikkāy*), (*Hyperanthera moringa*), the popular belief is that they keep away'evil spirits'.[6] As medicine the seeds are used in disorders of the intestines, liver and spleen.[7]

[1] Nadkarni (*Indian Materia Medica*) (1954).

[2] Personal communication by Dr. A. Dhamotharan. Cf. Winsl.: *pēykku vēppilai pōlē* - 'as repugnant to one as Margosa leaves are to devils'.

[3] Nadkarni (1954), p. 1191 ff.

[4] *ibid.*

[5] Personal communication by Dr. A. Dhamotharan.

[6] *ibid.*

[7] Nadkarni (1954), p. 811 ff.

Moccai (black-seeded *Dolichos, Dolichos lablab*) are used to heal phlegmatic disorders; the seeds have aphrodisiac properties.[1] *Moccai* beans can be used to test a man or a woman's fertility.[2]

A decoction of gram or horse gram (*kollu*), (*Dolichos biflorus*), is given to women during parturition. The gram is also effective in cases of an enlarged liver or spleen.[3]

Limes are associated with fertility. (Cf. Valpt.). They are said to cure, among other illnesses, mental illness and can be used to avert witchcraft.[4]

According to what we have said above, the goddess (Aṅkāḷamman, Pēcci) seems to have evolved from a *pēy*. This can be understood in terms of the patterns described by Elmore, i.e., the deification of a particular person whose spirit lingered on earth and was the cause of 'unnatural' events.[5] No myth to this effect about Aṅkāḷamman appears to be current in Tamilnadu and indeed, it is not really necessary to see the relationship between the *pēy* and the goddess in this light. The myths in chapter I revealed to some extent the complexity of the devotee's perception of the goddess. As the 'world egg', as the power which suddenly animates the grinding stone, she can be understood as all-pervasive, yet hidden to those who cannot see her. Vallāḷarājaṉ mistakes the goddess (garlanded with the intestines) for a *pēy*; he does not realize that the loss of his child and his wife was not due to the 'evil' work of a *pēy*, but was the doing of a goddess, come to teach him a lesson. Vallāḷarājaṉ is deluded and his delusion can be seen in relation to his arrogance, his belief that he is (or will be) more powerful than the gods. His ego-centred vision places him in opposition to the gods and prevents him from recognizing that the divine is omnipresent. To see the *pēy* rather than the goddess is to see life and death, health and

[1] Cf. Nadkarni (1954).

[2] If the bean placed in a pot with urine of the respective person sprouts, it signifies that the person is not barren. This according to *Cirrinpac cirōṉmaṇi nūl*, quoted by Paramacivanantam (1966), p. 121.
I thank Dr. A. Dhamotharan for this reference.

[3] Nadkarni (1954)

[4] Kaṅkaṇṭa. (1977), p. 21 ff., Cf. Crooke (1894), p. 353.

[5] Elmore (1925), p. 34 ff., 59 ff.

disease as separate and in opposition to each other rather than as contained within each other, as aspects of the same force. If the loss of a child, barrenness etc. are attributed to a *pēy*, all avenues for a restitution, for a healing process are blocked; if they are, however, attributed to a deity, the ill may be remedied and more importantly, the ill itself can be transformed from a negative to a positive: the suffering becomes the *grace* of the deity. Just as smallpox and cholera are goddesses, so can the loss of a child, death of a woman in childbirth, etc. be seen as a goddess or as the play, the *līlā*, of the goddess. This does not alter the fact that the ill itself (i.e., disease, death) is experienced as something horrible, something even to be feared, but it does mean that the ill (by recognizing it as part of the deity) can be tolerated, and, to some extent, understood. Instead of seeing Aṅkālamman (Pēcci) emerging from a *pēy*, i.e., from a purely negative 'being', it might be more correct to say that the goddess' presence is experienced as ambivalent and that her destructive aspect is expressed in images relating to the *pēy*. Keeping this in mind, we turn our attention to the first question regarding the meaning of the core rituals.

2. Purpose of the rituals (a.)

A very obvious reason for the performance of the ritual(s) is the pleasing of the goddess; contingent upon this is, of course, the presence of the goddess, her willingness to take part in the ritual(s). Her presence in the temple is not enough, she has to be in the *kapparai*, in the figure, in the *mūrtti* on the *vākaṇam*, etc., or broadly speaking, her presence should permeate every part or aspect of the rituals. Before a particularly crucial sequence of the ritual, often a 'test' is performed to ascertain the goddess' presence.[1] During the core rituals, the goddess has to be present in a particular 'form', namely her *akōra* form (see, for instance, the statement made by the Vālācāpāt *pūcāri*: the goddess is like a mad dog, she is in a frenzy, etc.). The figure in the cremation ground (if it is the goddess) should be made to look terrifying, the *kapparai*, as well, ought to be fearsome rather than benign. At the *mayāṇa pūcai* in Āṇaimalai, the young man who eventually rips out the life of the figure is possessed by the *akōra* goddess.[2] In fact, everything is done to invite the goddess in a most powerful and dangerous form. Great care is therefore also taken

[1] See below, 'Tests'.

[2] According to one informant (Anai., (2)), the goddess' *cakti* should be fully exhibited during the 'performance'.

not to offend her in any way. Certain rules which the performer of the ritual considers important have to be strictly followed. For instance, during the festival in Teli, I was not allowed to take a picture of the goddess while she was going around her procession in the streets, nor could I take pictures of the 'performers', except when whatever they had to do was finished and they were returning to the temple. Since a picture, which hung in the *pūcāri*'s house, showing the goddess on her *vākaṇam* in the street clearly contradicted this rule, I asked him about it. He said that that was exactly the point: after this picture had been taken, many bad things had happened (what they were, he did not want to elaborate on). A similar rule obtained in Vālācāpāt: no photo of the figure in the cremation ground, at least until it has been given life (i.e., the pupils applied). Other rules are that only particular people may carry the *kapparai*, that nobody should touch the figure before the *kollai*, etc. The rules are a safeguard, they help to channel the power of the goddess, to keep it under control.[1] What happens when the rules are broken or the deity offended varies: either the offending party is punished (see fn. Valpt., Mad.Gu.) or the goddess may show her wrath by withholding rain or by causing illnesses.[2] The *akōra rūpam* is, according to the Vallāla myth, the goddess' 'true' or 'own' form and the first step in pleasing the goddess, we can say, is to acknowledge and honour this form of hers, i.e, the willingness to face the *akōra* goddess.[3]

To please the goddess generally means to perform the rituals in such a way that the goddess will be pleased, and during or at the end of the festival, the goddess will be questioned to that effect. For instance, the Teli *pūcāri* posed the following questions through the intermediary of a woman possessed by the goddess:[4] 'Was the festival so far conducted properly?' (Answer: 'Yes'.) 'Are you (goddess) satisfied?' ('Yes'.) 'Will you bring good rains and will you give us a good harvest?' ('Yes'.) 'Have I done everything alright? If not, tell me.' ('Yes'.) 'Will I be celebrating the festival in the future as well?' ('We shall see about that next year.')

[1] Cf. Sontheimer (1984), p. 21 ('Dasarā at Devaragudda') who relates how the dangerous power of the god (Mailār/Khaṇḍobā) which is controlled by the rhythm of the drum can harm the dancer (possessed) when the order of the rhythm is disrupted.

[2] In connection with the Kōlamuḷi Amman temple in Mayilāppūr (Madras) the following incident is related: a white man working for the East India Company had taken a photo of the fire-walking ritual. In consequence he lost his eye-sight. He then worshipped the goddess and asked for forgiveness. The eye-sight was restored to him. Kaṅkaṇṭa. (1977), p. 73

[3] As pointed out by several informants, it takes courage to perform the ritual.

[4] Cf. ch. II. B.3.

What it means to perform the rituals in such a way that the goddess will be pleased, can be variously interpreted. Pomp and display of wealth are important aspects of the festival as a whole (wealth is a sign of the power and prestige of the goddess), and the performance of the rituals will, at least partially, be shaped by this belief. Of equal, or greater, importance is the correct performance of the rituals, i.e., according to tradition. Display of wealth and correct performance are often synonymous in the sense that underlying both is the concern for the goddess' power (*cakti*). The many variations in the performance of the core rituals show us that (at least nowadays) there is no one and only proper way of performing the rituals and that the deletion of either certain features of the rituals, or of the rituals themselves, may be compensated by more elaborate performances of other rituals (cf. Coimbatore, where the *kuntam iṟaṅkutal* seems to edge the *mayāṉakkollai* slowly out of the festival programme).

A vital question, and one which I cannot answer, is whether or not the same thing is being transmitted by the rituals, regardless of whether they are performed in a very elaborate or in an abbreviated fashion. What is being transmitted, or what may have been transmitted, we can only conjecture. Certainly, the view that the purpose of the core rituals was merely to propitiate a malevolent deity, is too simplistic. The core rituals are performed each year, at the same time (and with a few exceptions, the time is on *amāvācai* in the month of Māci or close to that day). The festival does not seem dependent on a crisis situation (though it may well have been so, once), i.e., the core rituals (the festival) are not performed in response to a particular crisis which has struck the clan or village.[1] We don't know what could have been the motivation behind the choice of the date, nor do we know if *makācivaṉrāttiri* played a role in the determination of the date (in most temples *makācivaṉrāttiri* seems of little significance, and usually no special *pūcai* or fasts for Śiva are observed on that day in connection with the festival).

The new moon night points, on the one hand, to darkness, inauspiciousness and to ceremonies to do with death and ancestors[2] and, on the other hand, since it marks the beginning of the *śukla pakṣa*, to a renewal,

[1] This is the case for other goddesses, for whom a festival is only celebrated when an epidemic has broken out; Whitehead (1976), p. 72.

[2] Rites for ancestors are often performed on new moon days; see Srinivas (1952), p. 121. On the new moon, see Merrey (1982), p. 16.

a victory over the dark forces. With regard to the core rituals, one could say that the dark side finds its expression in the *akōra* form of the goddess, while the bright side is the result of the ritual itself, the *piracātam*, the life-giving or life-renewing ashes, the strengthened faith, the certainty in the goddess' continued kindliness towards her devotees.

The whole rituals is, in a sense, a portrayal of death and re-birth. The foetus which is sucked out of the mother's womb by the *pēy*, the young child which is killed by some unknown malevolent spirit, death itself which feeds off the living, diseases of the mind due to some negative forces, in other words, all those ills, which a family suffers and has to cope with, are enacted in the rituals.

The goddess 'plays' three roles in this 'play': she is the one who causes the suffering, she is the one who suffers (the woman who loses her child, the person whose mind is disturbed, the barren woman) and she is the one who alleviates the suffering. What in real life can happen to anyone, anytime, without warning, is ritualized; the 'chaotic', unexpected is transformed into a structured, ordered event and thereby overcome. The message the ritual seems to proclaim is that death and disease are inevitable, that each individual has to face them at one point in his life, but that, no matter how horrifying and terrible (and maybe unjust) they are, they are part of the 'play' of the goddess, as are indeed also birth and health her 'play' and to realize all this, and therefore to worship the goddess, is the only way through which the devotee can bear his suffering, overcome his fears and emerge victorious.[1] Through the ritual act, the dark unknown forces are brought out into the open, concretized; through the sacrifice, they are pacified, and the 'life' which is offered, sanctified by the ritual, is the life-renewing gift bestowed upon the devotee who, through his offering, acknowledges those forces. The ritual then is not an act performed from fear of retribution should it be neglected - (according to informants, there is no fear of the goddess' wrath when the ritual cannot be performed for one or even a number of years) - but it is truly a glorification of the goddess. The *pūcāri* who performs the

[1] Identical ideas are expressed in the Bengali *maṅgal* poems, those of Śītalā and other goddesses; see Dimock's insightful analysis, Dimock (1982), p. 184 ff., at p. 196. Cf. Courtright (1978), p. 8: 'With the disease as the presence of the goddess, one's pain ceases to be pain, one's fear is transformed into devotion, and one's previous attachments to gratifications of ego -- even the desire for life itself -- are abandoned and taken up into the grace of the goddess.'

ritual is aware that the ritual serves, foremost, to establish an intimate contact between him (and the participants) and the goddess; that the ritual creates an atmosphere conducive to a renewal and strengthening of the faith in the goddess and that thereby the goddess derives her power, her strength. The *pūcāri* knows that a diminishing faith in the goddess will cause suffering for the devotees and that without some sacrifice (in whichever form) and without an act of love towards the goddess (and honoring her presence, no matter how 'horrifying' she may appear, certainly is included in this act of love), he (the *pūcāri*) cannot expect her to shield him with her protective powers. Whether the goddess chose him (i.e., his family) or he chose her,[1] once the relationship has begun, there is a mutual dependency between goddess and *pūcāri* (devotee); if he neglects the goddess, she will eventually neglect him, and while the *pūcāri*'s (devotee's) neglect of the goddess will not necessarily result in an increase in deaths and illnesses brought about by her anger, it will make it more difficult for the devotee to cope with crisis situations in his life.

'Fears alone are never enough to create a symbolism people live by...', states Bolle,[2] and this is certainly true. Contrary to what one may assume, based on people's fears about malevolent spirits, Aṅkāḷamman does not seem to inspire her devotees with great fear. Generally speaking, they see in her 'the mother', the one who protects them, rather than one who is out to harm them. If the goddess' form is frightening and if, during the core rituals especially, she is portrayed in her terrifying aspect, it is not, I believe, to instill fears in the devotees, but rather to evoke a feeling of awe, of respect, comparable maybe to what the ordinary man would feel in the presence of a powerful king. We have variously mentioned that the power (*cakti*) of the goddess is important (to illustrate the power of the goddess, the *pūcāri* often related some 'miracle' stories[3]) and this power is inherently dangerous (as maybe all power is), but it is not inherently malicious. Many of the rules pertaining to the performance of the rituals may be designed to channel the power of the goddess, to keep it within certain boundaries and to prevent those who are not ritually 'pure' from coming into too close a contact with her dangerous power, as otherwise it might harm them (e.g., Anai., where only the appointed persons are allowed inside the square where the figure lies). Any fears the devotee may have during the ritual do not arise from a belief

[1] See ch. I, B.4.

[2] Bolle (1969), p. 133.

[3] See ch. IV.

that the goddess is malevolent, but they are based on the knowledge of the goddess' power and the harm which may result, if that power is not respected and treated properly. With regard to the power of the goddess, the following interesting reply may be quoted - it was made by an informant (belonging to the same non-brahmin caste as the *pūcāri* of that particular Aṅkāḷamman temple) in response to the question of why Harijans were not allowed inside the temple: 'It is in their (Harijans') own interest; the goddess is so fierce, so powerful, she would harm them (if they entered the temple).'

There are various aspects from which the core rituals can be viewed, and the meaning one assigns to them can vary accordingly. From some devotees' point of view the rituals may be not much more than an occasion to collect as much from the sacred power as possible, i.e, to fill whole shopping bags with the ashes/earth of the figure in the cremation ground; for others, it may be an occasion to fulfil a vow or to make a special appeal to the goddess for help. The core rituals present an opportunity for the participants to re-establish the harmony in their lives which had been disrupted by physical or mental ills: the person distressed by some 'evil spirit' will be cured by the '*kapparai*', the woman longing for a child will become fertile by drinking the milk poured over the 'foetus', the person who is sick or who has done a wrong may take the opportunity to make or fulfil a vow.

One *pūcāri*'s interpretation of the cremation ground *pūcai* was that the goddess, by eating the dead body, absorbs within herself the evil (spirits).[1] By analogy, one could say that the goddess removes all the ills located in the abdominal region by 'eating' the intestines and the liver. Tamil *pittam, pittu*, 'bewilderment, lunacy, madness', - a term used to describe the goddess' or Śiva's madness[2] means also 'bile'; and 'to draw out someone's intestines (*kuṭalaippiṭuṅka*) and to wear them as garlands' connotes sure victory over one's enemy. The goddess, adorned with the intestines, can therefore just as well suggest to the devotee her victory over all those enemies who make the devotee's life miserable. Just as she relieved Śiva from his madness and his sin (*tōṣam*, i.e., the *piramātti*), so she removes the devotee's *tōṣam* (that is her role on earth),[3]

[1] See ch. III, A.5.2.

[2] Yocum (1982), p. 144 ff.

[3] See myth 2.

but those who ignore her, who fail to recognize that she is the source of all life, those she truly haunts as an 'evil spirit'.

3. Features of the core rituals shared by rituals for other deities.

What makes the core rituals characteristic for the cult of Aṅkāḷamman is the combination of the various elements. The elements themselves, or aspects of them, can be encountered in rituals for other deities. Some of these rituals or elements are noted in the following.

The image of the female *pēy*, who garlands herself with intestines, is not only reflected in the rituals for Aṅkāḷamman or Pēcci. Whitehead[1] describes a buffalo sacrifice for Peddamma in Andhra during which a Mālā wears the intestines and bites the liver of a lamb. During the procession through this village, rice soaked in blood is thrown up into the air. To feed the 'evil spirits' with blood rice is a common occurrence; sometimes, however, the intestines themselves are offered to the spirits.[2] Features such as eating intestines or dead bodies are not confined to goddesses. A very popular god of the Tirunelveli district is Cutalaimātacāmi. Cutalaimātan is known to eat dead bodies. One of the short stories of the author Rakunātan[3] contains a very vivid description of the festival celebrated for this god. The ritual is performed at midnight. A person (here the hero, Kattāri) gets possessed by the god. Accompanied by the *pūcāri*, Kattāri walks to the cremation ground. Choosing one among several burning bodies, Kattāri (possessed by Cutalaimātan) inserts his fingers into the body's stomach, pulls out the intestines and stuffs them into his mouth; they fall over his chest and circle his neck. He takes a bit of the flesh and eats it. The author has the player of the *vil*[4] sing about Cutalaimātan who carries a few dead bodies like garlands on his shoulders and from whose mouth the flesh he eats is spilling out. That this description cannot be totally a fancy of the author is certain, for,

[1] Whitehead (1976), p. 52

[2] *ibid.*, p. 73: during the festival for Uramma of the Bellary district. The intestines are meant for the boundary spirits. Cf. Bolle (1969), p. 132 ff, his interpretation of such rituals.

[3] Rakunātan (1980), *Āṉait tī*, p. 72 ff. I thank Dr. K. Paramasivam, Maturai, for this reference.

[4] an instrument which looks like a big bow.

statements made by informants, at the Aṅkāḷamman̲ temples in the Tirunelveli district, confirm that such a ritual for this god exists. One of the informants (Kilakul.) mentioned that for the god Macān̲acāmi, also called Māṭacāmi or Cuṭalaimāṭacāmi, a ritual (in the cremation ground) takes place whereby clay images of this and other deities are set up in the cremation ground and later destroyed. Sometimes, a *cāmiyāṭi*, possessed by Cuṭalaimāṭacāmi, will insert a banana in the belly of a goat which has been cut open and then eat the banana soaked in the blood. Marie-Louise Reiniche's description[1] corroborates this statement: 'Dans ce matériel du Tirunelveli, possession et sacrifices sanglants apparaissent indissociables, même si la possession a bien d'autres aspects. Cette relation est particulièrement en évidence dans les sacrifices sanglants à Sudalai Madan, lorsque le kodai a lieu dans un sanctuaire qui se trouve hors de l'agglomération. Avant le sacrifice les possédés font le tour du cimetière (*cuṭalai*); quand ils reviennent, la poitrine d'un bouc (qui a éventuellement été attaché sur une plate-forme) est ouverte, et le possédé de Sudalai Madan avale des morceaux de bananes qu'on a déposés dans la blessure.' Reiniche then suggests an interpretation which, she adds, cannot be entirely proven, namely, that the ritual could be the enactment of the god's favorite crime, that of devouring the foetus of a child about to be born. The story of Māṭan̲, retold by Reiniche, contains an episode in which Māṭan̲ opens the belly of a woman pregnant in her ninth month, takes out the foetus, swallows it and then disappears, wearing her intestines as garlands.[2] We remember that the fostermothers of Cuṭalaimāṭan̲, Pēcci and Brahmarākṣasi, are also eaters of babies and corpses. The similarities between the *mayān̲akkollai* and the ritual for Cuṭalaimāṭan̲ are striking. It would

[1] Reiniche (1975), p. 173 ff., at p. 198.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 186. 'kodai' - *koṭai* is a festival lasting three days.Cf. Pate (1917) - Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, p. 117: the ritual described here is a bit different: the hearts of the sacrificial animals are removed, placed on leaves. The possessed person (*kōmarattāṭi*) will stoop down and drink the blood from the hearts. Sometimes 'bystanders' will soak plantains in the blood of the animals and give these to eat to the *kōmarattāṭi*. A *kaṇiyaṉ* may cut his arm with a knife until blood flows. The blood is distributed on plantain leaves and some of it is drunk by the *kōmarattāṭi*. At midnight, the *tiraḷai* ('a round solid object' - TL) - 'a dumpling of rice and meat', mixed with blood, is thrown into the air in the cremation ground - this is supposed to be caught by Cuṭalaimāṭan̲.

be interesting to know how far devotees experience Cuṭalaimāṭaṉ as the 'eater of unborn children' and how much they see him also in a more positive role. Cuṭalaimāṭaṉ is a good example of how certain beliefs or concepts, when translated into a cult, need not be ordered according to a male-female dichotomy.

In the Maturai area a *pūcai*, called *cūlāṭṭuppūcai* (*pūcai* of a pregnant goat), is performed at midnight for the goddess Rākkāyi. The belly of the goat is cut open, the foetus taken out and offered to the goddess.[1]

In Andhra the goddess Kati Aṅkammā is worshipped in the cremation ground. This goddess 'is said to live on corpses and to kill young children. She also sets fire to houses, and like all other Indian demons, delights in killing cattle.'[2] For the ritual in the cremation ground a figure is made: 'The Madiga story-teller goes to the burial ground accompanied by the people in whose interest the worship is conducted, together with a crowd from the village ... He takes earth and with the help of cotton to make it stick together without unnecessary delay, he hastily makes a rude image. Eggs are placed in the head for eyes, and shells for teeth. The image is dressed with a bodice and *koka*, and glass bangles are placed on the arms.

After preparing the image, food is cooked and a heap of it placed before it. A black goat is brought and killed and its blood is caught and poured into the mouth of the image.' The image is worshipped. 'But the people soon leave the place, as the ceremonies are not pleasant, and the dangers are many.'[3] Unfortunately the description does not tell us whether the figure is in an upright position or lying on the ground, though the use of cotton 'to make the earth stick' points to the former.[4]

In the *mayāṉakkollai* of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr we encountered 'five conical heaps representing Gaṇeśa'. Such 'heaps', very much like stones, can stand for just about any deity. In a description of the festival for Durgammā

[1] Information by Mr. K. Muttucāmi, Maturai, who saw this ritual performed at the Aiyaṉār temples of Koccaṭai and Potumpūr. In the Potumpūr temple Aṅkāḷ-amman and Kurunātacāmi sit facing the entrance, the other gods (21 in total) surround them.

[2] Elmore (1925), p. 36 ff.

[3] *ibid.*, p. 37-38.

[4] During Kālī *pūjā* in Calcutta, Kālī is worshipped in the cremation ground. There, a figure of Kālī is made to which black goats are offered shortly after midnight. Kinsley (1975), p. 124.

cited by Oppert[1] these heaps are mentioned, together with an element comparable to the *kapparai*: 'In her temple outside the village she [Durgammā] is usually represented by five conical earthen symbols called *Kēlu*... In his house he [the pūjāri] keeps the more important symbols of the goddess, viz., two tiny images of Basavana; a cane staff 3 feet in length almost covered with silver bands (the offering of devotees) and surmounted by a cobra's head in silver; a female face also in silver, and nearly life-size.' These things, together with a new pot filled with water, are brought to the Kēlu and 'put in the place of the Kēlu, which are removed to one side and ornamented with bangles. The silver face is erected on a stick behind the pot of water and a woman's cloth is tied to it just under the face and over the pot of water. The other symbols are placed beside it, the snake upright.' Various animals are then sacrificed to this goddess.

This may suffice to prove that Aṅkāḷammaṉ cannot claim a unique form of worship; no deity in India probably can. Aṅkāḷammaṉ, Cuṭalaimāṭaṉ, Kaṭi Aṅkammā, Calcutta Kālī, all are 'cremation ground deities', they further share a taste for corpses and children, yet they do not share in each case the same ritual elements. What complicates matters further is that one and the same deity can have a different character, a different form of worship, depending on where she is located. Kālī of West Bengal is not the Kāḷi of Tamilnadu, (at least not today). Variations exist even for the same deity within a locally confined area (Aṅkāḷammaṉ is a case in point, cf. Tirunelveli district, Vīrapāṇṭi). Comparisons of various deities with each other are useful, but the rituals performed for a deity have to be seen, first of all, within the context of the deity's own cult before they can be contrasted with those of other deities. In other words, Aṅkāḷammaṉ's ritual image cannot be drawn exclusively on the basis of one example, it has to be shaped according to the patterns underlying the rituals as they are performed in a number of temples. This is what has hopefully transpired from the lengthy discussion of the core rituals. The female figure and the *kapparai* of the Vālāntūr temple take on a new or deeper meaning when compared with what happens in other Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples. Again, the *mayāṉa pūcai* for Mācāṇiyammaṉ in Āṉaimalai, especially the destruction of the figure (which contradicts the myth: Rāma was told not to destroy the figure) can only be understood when placed within the context

[1] Oppert (1893), p. 497-498, fn. 283.

of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ cult. The example of the core rituals for Aṅkāḷammaṉ shows how complex such rituals can be; each variation is like a small part of a puzzle, which, when completed, gives the picture a unity which in turn assigns the individual piece its place within the frame of the picture. Each variation may absorb the local coloring or 'import' one or the other fragment (be it from another cult or from the common stock of Hinduism), thereby making the picture grow and expand in various directions. The more changes a piece undergoes, or the more 'foreign' elements it absorbs, the less it will fit the puzzle, until it finally stands separate and begins to shape itself according to the lines and colors of a different picture and becomes a piece of that new puzzle. For instance, the connection between Aṅkāḷammaṉ and Macāṉiyammaṉ is, in some cases, very loose and may, with time, be severed. One or the other temple may then align itself with other local cults or stress those rituals which are popular in that particular area.

The core rituals, together with their myths, are the distinguishing mark of Aṅkāḷammaṉ. They reveal a typical trait of the goddess which other rituals cannot, either because they are popular also for other deities (e.g., *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*) or because they are not performed in the majority of Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples (e.g., *alaku niṟuttal*). The core rituals contain a form of worship which is no doubt very old and which must have always been considered important enough not to be discarded.

The core rituals not only share some of their features with rituals for other deities, but they also share them to some extent with rituals or rites belonging to other 'areas' of Hinduism. A lengthy treatment of these similarities would be beyond the scope of this study, however, some of them ought to be mentioned, since they show, e.g., how a particular symbol can have a different meaning depending on its context. The ritual in the cremation ground involving the figure made of ashes of a burned body is, of course, in many ways reminiscent of funeral ceremonies. As part of the funeral rites, a number of castes fashion a small figure of the deceased (with rice flour, clay or ashes from burned wood); after the offerings or a *pūcai*, the figure is dissolved in water.[1] This figure can also be made

[1] Thurston (1906), Odde: p. 159; Yānādi: p. 168, Mādigas: p. 169, Okkiliyan: p. 171.

of the ashes of the deceased,[1] and the funeral rites (largely based on Hindu customs) performed for the kings of Siam attest to this practice.[2]

A figure prepared from earth, resembling Kālī, is used in rites of exorcism. The figure is not made in the cremation ground, but near the house of the person possessed by the spirit. Inside the belly of the figure a chicken is buried and covered by a plank. On top of the plank a small fire is made. Into this fire flowers are offered by the person possessed by the spirit. After the spirit has been caught in a small wooden doll held by the exorcist (the doll is connected with the possessed by a strand of his/her hair), the chicken is sacrificed and some of its blood is sprinkled into the mouth of the figure.[3]

Magic rites often are performed in the cremation ground, and some of these rites require the foetus of a primipara. Some of the cures for lunacy, known to the Tamil Siddhas, included magical rites and the use of a foetus (18 varieties of lunacy were all 'attributed to the possession of the body by demons').[4] 'The ash taken from the cremation ground during midnight is also supposed to have great magical value 'either in fascinating and keeping under one's control the kings or in totally ruining one's enemies'.'[5]

The cremation ground, the corpse, funerary ashes are connected with practices of Kāpālikas and Aghoris; to the latter is attributed the 'habit' of eating human flesh.[6]

4. Daksa's sacrifice

So far we have left aside the core rituals of the two temples in the Tirunelveli district and the one in Vīrapāṇṭi (Salem district). These

[1] See Caland (1896), p. 106.

[2] The ashes of the deceased king were 'given roughly the form of a human figure with the head turned towards the east. They were then stirred up and reformed with the head turned towards the west. Finally the process was repeated with the head turned towards the east. This is evidently symbolic of the rising, setting, and again rising of the sun - birth, death, and rebirth.' From: Quaritch Wales (1931), p. 154. (For this reference I owe thanks to both Mrs. E. Kornpointner and Mrs. E. Bild).

[3] Thurston (1912), p. 211-213 relates similar rituals, but without a figure.

[4] Venkataraman (1980), p. 150 ff. (citing *Akattiyar Kirikai Nūl*).

[5] *ibid.*, citing Bhōgar.

[6] Lorenzen (1972), p. 4-5, 63, 65. On Aghoris see Balfour (1897)p. 341 ff. and Barrow (1893), p. 197 ff.

three temples share the myth of Dakṣa's sacrifice,[1] but the ritual of the Vīrapāṇṭi temple is different from that of the other two.

In Vīrapāṇṭi the sitting figure of Dakṣa (Takkaṉ) is fashioned in the cremation ground. What is Dakṣa doing in the cremation ground? According to the *pūcāri*, Takkaṉ did *tavam* in the cremation ground, and the goddess (Īśvarī) decided to prevent her father's austerities. 'First the goddess sent Vinayāka (to destroy Takkaṉ), but Vināyaka was so much pleased when he was offered sugar cane and other food (by Takkaṉ) that he forgot about his mission. Īśvarī then sent Subrahmaṇya, but since he has a liking for dancing girls, he stopped to watch a dance performance. Finally the goddess went to the cremation ground herself. She cut off Takkaṉ's head, but later repented for her act. Since the head had been burned in the fire, she had to revive her father by placing a goat's head on him.' The other version, told by informant (2) follows the familiar theme of Dakṣa's sacrifice and his refusal to invite Śiva; the goddess' subsequent anger and decision to obstruct her father's sacrifice. It is curious that Dakṣa's figure should be made in the cremation ground, and the *pūcāri* was well aware of the fact that, in other temples, the figure is lying on its back. The *pūcāri*'s idea, that Dakṣa performs *tavam* in the cremation ground, may have been influenced by faint memories of the Vallāḷa myth; in any case, the ritual totally ignores either Vīrabhadra or Śiva and concentrates solely on the goddess who takes and restores Dakṣa's life.[2] Here the attention is not on the figure's belly but on its head.[3] The head is offered into the fire.[4] The way in which the goat is killed is rather remarkable and reminds us of those who, in a frenzy, fall over the dead bodies during the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. There are parallels between this ritual and the core rituals as discussed above, but more research, especially in the surrounding areas of this village, would be needed to see whether this ritual, and particularly the sitting figure, is an isolated case or whether we are dealing with a ritual common to this areas. Since we do have

[1] This myth was told in two other places (Mdr.Cinta., Kuttai.): Aṅkāḷammaṉ was said to originate from Dākṣāyaṇi who, after immolating herself, had no body (*aṅkam illāmal*), which gave Aṅkāḷammaṉ her name.

[2] In the widest sense, Dakṣa, Brahmā and Vallāḷa are related in that they represent patriarchy and male-dominated creation (the enemy which the goddess fights). For similarities between Dakṣa and Brahmā, see O'Flaherty (1981-Śiva), p. 128 ff.

[3] Cf. Kuṉṉattūr and Muttaṇamapālaiyam.

[4] In most puranic accounts Dakṣa's head is thrown into the fire. Cf. *Bhagavatapurāṇa* (1954), p. 8 ff., *Śivapurāṇa* (1970), p. 395 ff., *Vāyupurāṇa* (1864), p. 120 ff. (In the *Vāyupurāṇa* Daksa flees into the sky in the shape of a deer). Cf. also Dessigane (1967), p. 174 ff.

a *kapparai* in Vīrapāṇṭi and a *pillaippāvu* - the figure of a foetus is carried around and women pour milk over it and offer money to it - we can presume that the ritual in the cremation ground shares a common background with the cremation ground ritual of the other Aṅkāḷamman̲ temples.

The case of the rituals in the Tirunelveli district is somewhat different. Dakṣa's head is cut off as well, but not by the goddess, rather it is cut off by Vīrabhadra. No figure of Dakṣa is made, only his head is modelled and then destroyed. The informants related the myth as follows:

'Śiva eloped with Pārvatī, Dakṣa's daughter. Dakṣa, who felt that Śiva had not shown him the proper respect, decided to conduct a *yākam* (sacrifice) and not to invite Śiva. Śiva, unable to bear this disgrace, sweated, and from his sweat was born *vērvai puttiran̲* (the son of sweat, i.e., Vīrapattiran̲). Śiva ordered him to cut off Dakṣa's head.'

To celebrate the slaying of Dakṣa, Dakṣa's head is taken around the streets and later buried in the cremation ground. This takes place on the day before *makācivan̲rāttiri*. The next day, Śiva appears to Pārvatī; for this the *alaku niṟuttal* is performed (see below). Before Dakṣa's head is brought to the cremation ground (which happens around four in the morning), the goddess, together with a *kumpam* (an earthen pot filled with water and decorated with mango leaves, flowers and a coconut), pays a visit to the Cuṭalai temple (Kilapa.). Since Cuṭalaimāṭan̲ is the guardian or god of the cremation ground, it is possible that his assent or protection has to be sought, before the head can be buried. When the small clay pot is broken, the rice is spilled and left as food for the crows (see ch. III, A 3.11).

In both temples Aṅkāḷamman̲ has no part in a ritual in the cremation ground, in both temples she is vegetarian (in Kilapa. Pēcci is a meat-eating deity: two weeks after the festival, she receives an offering of goats and chickens) and, although Aṅkāḷamman̲ is not considered married to Śiva, he unites with her during the *alaku niṟuttal* ritual and he joins her in at least one procession as Naṭarājā on his own *vākaṇam*. Vīrabhadra, the sacrificer, is in both temples a vegetarian god (in Kilakul. all gods are *cuttam*). The picture we get is of a very much 'tamed' Aṅkāḷamman̲, one who no longer eats dead bodies or rips open the stomach of a pregnant queen (neither has Pēcci been charged with these 'duties' here). One wonders if Cuṭalaimāṭan̲ simply would not tolerate a rival. Yet Aṅkāḷamman̲'s link with the cremation ground has not been totally severed. The head of Dakṣa (which looks like a Rākṣasa) is carried to the cremation ground, given a blood-sacrifice, destroyed and buried (- it is the '*acura caṅkāram*' - Kilapa.).

The only instrument allowed to be present when the head is buried, is the *pampai*[1] - the drum which has to be played for Aṅkāḷamman. Dakṣa's head here reminds us very much of the *kapparai*, especially since it finds its end in the cremation ground. Why, we could ask, was the Dakṣa myth attached to this head, rather than the Brahminicide myth? The Dakṣa myth, according to the above version, absolves both Śiva and the goddess (Aṅkāḷamman) from any sin or pollution (Vīrabhadra alone, and without the aid of Bhadrakālī, cuts off Dakṣa's head) and the head itself, being Dakṣa's instead of Brahmā's, is of a much less dangerous nature: it does not become the avenging fury, Brahminicide, because in the myth it is replaced.

We have seen above (in the discussion of the core rituals) that the ritual generally resists adaption to the myth. In this case, the coincidence between ritual and myth is almost complete, but the 'asuric' head has not yet convincingly become Dakṣa's: it is not replaced and in the ritual, a chicken sacrifice precedes the head's destruction; that is, the head or the 'Asura' still defies all attempts at being fully turned into a relatively harmless, yet potentially precious, sacrificial offering.

D. Other rituals

While the core rituals are the 'typical' rituals for Aṅkāḷamman, the other rituals are performed for a variety of deities in Tamilnadu. The *kuntam iṟaṅkutal*, for instance, is part of the Māriyamman, Turōpatai-yamman (Draupadī)[2] festivals. In the following, these other rituals shall be discussed briefly.

1. Flag hoisting, tying of *kaṅkaṇam* or *kāppu*[3]

The flag hoisting ceremony marks the beginning of a festival. The flag is first fastened to the top of a bamboo pole and then curled around the length of the pole. The flag itself is white and has a

[1] According to the Kilapa. informant, the *pampaikkārar* is a Pataiyāṭci, 'of the caste of those who fish in tanks like the Cempatavar.' (Inf. (2)). The fowl which is sacrificed is given to the *pampaikkārar*.

[2] See Hiltebeitel (1982), p. 72-111.

[3] For a detailed explanation of the *kāppu*, see Diehl (1956), p. 252 ff.

symbol such as the tiger, the bull or the goddess drawn on it. Often it is soaked in turmeric water, that is, dyed yellow. The flag will be tied to the permanent flag post, if there is one.[1] Some temples mark the flag hoisting by raising a bundle of *darbha* grass tied together with mango leaves (Kilakul.). When the figure in the cremation ground is made, a small yellow flag is placed at its head - its purpose is to mark the area around the figure as a sacred site, a temple. On the same day, the *kaṅkaṇam* or *kāppu* (a piece of string soaked in turmeric) will be tied on the wrist of the *pūcāri* and other people who participate in the festival and who have to observe certain restrictions during that period (usually dietary restrictions and sexual abstinence). Those who take part only at particular rituals, e.g., the *kuntam iṟaṅkutal*, have their *kāppu* tied later. The goddess (and the other gods in the temple) receive a *kāppu* as well. The *kāppu* is not only a safeguard against pollution (*tīṭṭu*), but also: 'When we put on the *kaṅkaṇam*, we call all the gods and ask them to be present during the festival, to protect us and to watch over us that we won't have fights among ourselves. After the festival, when we take off the *kaṅkaṇam*, we send the gods back.' (Teli).

2. The pot (*karakam, karaka; kalacam, kalaśa; kumpam, kumbha*)

The topic of the *karakam* is vast and complex. Different names are given by informants to the *karakam*, e.g., *pūṅkarakam, caktikkarakam*; instead of *karakam*, the term *kumpam* or *kalacam* is used; furthermore, *karakam* can also be a fire pot, then called *akkiṉikkarakam*, which in turn is called *tīccaṭṭi*. The pot is generally considered to represent the womb, i.e, the goddess; however, although this may be true in most cases, it is not always so, since the pot can also stand for a male deity.[2] During the festival for Aṅkāḷammaṉ, the pot is used for a variety of rituals. In Āṉaimalai, the 'life' which was extracted from the figure in the cremation ground is placed into the *kumpam*, which is then brought to the temple. In Mēl Malaiyaṉūr, the *pūṅkarakam* is carried from the tank (the water source can be a tank or river and is often simply called 'Gaṅgā') to the temple. The goddess is said to be sitting in or on the pot. In Vālācāpāṭ, the *pūṅkarakam* is

[1] Few of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temples have a permanent flag staff. The purpose of the flag staffs was apparently to mark the position of the sanctum. They were not intended as permanent structures. Cf. Ramachandra Rao (1979), p. 104.

[2] Cf. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (1980), p. 49 ff. Cf. Long (1972), p. 22: During the Mahāśivarātri celebrations in a Śiva temple in Madras 'eleven earthen vessels (Kalaśa, Kumbha) filled with water, etc. are established, representing the eleven forms in which Rudra-Śiva manifests Himself in the world.' Cf. Sontheimer (1976), p. 27: Kāḷbhairav is represented by a pot. We have seen that in one myth (ch. I, B 3) Brahmā is the *kalacam*.

prepared in the evening of the day on which the figure in the cremation ground has been made. The pot is decorated near the river. It is a large earthen pot around which string is tied. Turmeric water and *kuṅkumam* powder are sprinkled on it and 25 paisa are dropped into it; its mouth is sealed with a coconut. Branches of margosa leaves are tied around its upper portion, flower garlands are wrapped around these and the whole is topped with a lime of which exactly half has been covered with *kuṅkumam* powder. The finished pot, representing the goddess, is placed on rice which is spread on a banana leaf. After a *tīpārātaṉai*, this pot is placed on the *vākaṉam* of the goddess, while another *karakam*, much more elaborately decorated, is carried on the head of the *pūcāri* or *pampaikkārar* during the procession. The *karakam* or *kalacam* is also a component of the *alaku niṟuttal* (see below). A small earthen pot, called *kalacam*, used to be placed at the four corners of the area containing the cremation ground figure (Kovai). Now these four *kalacam* mark the four corners of the *kuṇṭam*. For the walking-over-hot coals ritual the priest, who is the first to walk over the coals, will carry on his head a *karakam* (it is filled with water and decorated near a tank or river - Per., Kovai, Pal., etc.). In Viluppuram a *kalacam* is placed at the head of the figure in the cremation ground. This *kalacam* contains a *māvilakku* (lamp made of rice flour) and a coin and it is topped with a coconut; whereas the pot with the flame inside which is deposited at the figure's head in Vālācāpāt (during the opening-of-the-eyes ritual) is not covered with a coconut. A pot sometimes represents the faces of the *kapparai* - usually this pot is simply called *pāṉai*.

Apart from the instances in which the pot clearly represents the goddess, the exact function of the pot cannot be determined, nor do informants have adequate explanations about it. In its widest application, the pot is a carrier of life, be it that of a deity or a human.[1] The more specific meaning of the pot depends on what is in the pot, whether it be water (considered cooling) or fire (hot), fire e.g., expressing the goddess' anger (Perum.).[2] Here again, however, interpretations may differ. The *akkiṉik-karakam*, according to the Teli *pūcāri*, burns away the goddess' pollution.

[1] Cf. Srinivas (1952), p. 87: The pot which is broken at the funeral 'ritually severs the dead man's connexion with his living relatives.' (I.e., the life in one world ends and the soul of the deceased enters into a life in another world, that of the ancestors).

[2] Cf. Beck (1981), p. 95.

Finally, the pot is simply a very convenient vessel for carrying things to and from the temple, especially the water for the *apiṣēkam*. Such pots (*kalacam*) as contain the *tīrttam* are also decorated with coconuts and usually covered with a yellow cloth and they are carried on the heads of devotees or *pūcāri*.

3. 'Tests', (*paritcai*)

The performance of some rituals depends upon the successful outcome of certain tests (the term used by informants was '*paritcai*' or English 'test'). The informant of Orraikkālmaṇṭapam narrated three such tests, all of them in relation to the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*. The first of these tests takes place at the location of the figure (which here is not in the cremation ground, but somewhere at the outskirts of the village). About ten people are present (the other villagers watch from a distance). The head of a pig is cut off, then one person (a Tēvar) will lift up the head in one hand and hold in the other, uplifted hand some rice. The pig's head then has to open its mouth three times - as if it were eating the rice. If the pig 'eats' the rice,'they (the villagers) are happy.' Here the test if for the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* ritual. In other places, this 'test', though again a sign of the goddess' acceptance of the sacrifice, is not interpreted in relation to the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*. For instance, if the heads of the pig, cock or goat do not 'drink' the water placed before them, the *pūcāri* has to find out why the goddess did not accept the sacrifice and then he has to do the *pūcai* again (Mad.Gu.).[1] Before the *kuṇṭam* (the bed of hot coals) is prepared, the second test takes place (Orrai). In front of the goddess on her *ciṅka vākaṇam*, the appointed ten to fifteen people who wear the *kaṅkaṇam* assemble. Each person places a lime on top of a betel leaf on the palm of his hand. In an upward motion, he raises his hand over his head, turning the hand upside down. The lime is not supposed to fall down. The same procedure is done with a plate containing mustard seeds, pepper corns and sacred ashes: the plate it turned upside-down without its contents falling out. In Vālāntūr, plates containing pepper corns, mustard seeds and cumin (*cīrakam*) are turned upside down; here it is not considered a test (on the same evening *karakam* dances are performed and the goddess is seated on a swing; i.e., it is the day following the *pūcai* to Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi; there is no

[1] Cf. Kunna., Mutta. Whitehead (1976), p. 63: Water is poured on the victim's head and if it opens its mouth, it is a sign that the deity has accepted the sacrifice.

kuntam iṟaṅkutal). In Irukūr the same ceremony is, like in Orraikkāl-mantapam, in the nature of a test and is performed before the *alaku niṟuttal*, at two in the morning - there the *kuntam iṟaṅkutal* follows about seven hours later. The third test (Orrai.) is the *alaku niṟuttal*, performed shortly before the devotees enter the *kuntam*. To make sure that the goddess gives her blessing for the *kuntam iṟaṅkutal*, another, very common test is made: flowers rolled into a ball (*pūpantu, pūccentu*) and limes are both rolled over the hot coals, just before the *pūcāri* and devotees walk over them. The flower balls and the limes should not show signs of burns. The limes or flower balls are taken from the coals by women who wish to get pregnant.[1] One should mention that these tests very rarely fail, but if they do fail, drastic steps might have to be taken to please the goddess, as we shall see below.

4. *Alaku niṟuttal* or *alaku niṟuttutal*

This ritual is not performed in many Aṅkāḷamman temples.[2] *Alaku niṟuttal* or *alaku niṟuttutal* means 'to place a pointed weapon' or ' to cause a pointed weapon to stand upright'. The basic form of the ritual is as follows: Two vessels (*karakam, kalacam, ceppukkuṭam*), one usually of copper, are brought to the river and filled with water. They are decorated in the usual manner, i.e., a string is tied crosswise around the body and a *kāppu* is tied around the neck of the vessel, flowers are draped around. One pot will have mango leaves and a coconut in its mouth. The pot with the coconut will be placed on top of the other pot. A sword, about 70-100 cm in length, to which also a *kāppu* has been tied, is decorated at its hilt with flowers and sometimes with a lime. The sword will be placed tip downwards on the rim of the lower pot and has to stand upright without moving for a specified time. (Sometimes only one vessel will be used for the ritual). The time varies from temple to temple, it can be a few minutes, one hour, up to two hours.

We have said above that this ritual is sometimes a 'test'. If this is so, the ritual simply proves the goddess' presence or grace in making the sword stand upright. There is, however, a deeper meaning to the ritual, and this meaning becomes most explicit in the performance of the ritual in

[1] Sprinkling water over the animal which is about to be sacrificed, to see if it shakes itself, can also fall under the category of 'tests'. If the animal does not shiver, it is considered a sign from the goddess that she will not accept this particular animal.

[2] It is performed in: Kilakul, Kilapa., Parama., Ura., Iru., Avan., Orrai., Kunna., Amur. According to Winslow, the ritual is also performed for Draupadī.

Kīḻākkuḷam. When we talked about the establishment of the goddess on earth and the theme of her union with Śiva, we mentioned that Śiva's appearance to the goddess on *makācivaṉrāttiri* is staged in Kīḻākkuḷam as follows: the goddess is placed inside an area which is surrounded by a screen and in which there is a lamp. The shadow, which falls on the light, is believed to be a sign that Śiva has entered the area, a sign that he has picked up the goddess and is eloping with her (see ch. I, B.3). While the small *maṇṭapam* for the goddess is set up, the pots for the *alaku niṟuttal* are prepared inside the sanctum of the temple. As soon as the shadow is seen on the light, the sword is placed upright on the pot. The sword stands there for about one hour, after which the *pūcāri* inside the sanctum calls out the goddess' name and the sword falls into his hands. According to the informant, the standing of the sword signifies that the Ammaṉ has been doing *tavam; tavam* to induce Śiva to appear before her. The informant explained:

> 'When Takkaṉ performed his sacrifice, the goddess wished to attend it. Śiva did not agree to it. Nevertheless, she insisted, and finally Śiva said: '*Pō*!' (Go!). Śakti replied: 'Say '*pōyiṟṟuvā*!'' (Go and come back).[1] But Śiva said: 'No, I am only saying '*pō*' and not '*vā*'.' Before going to earth, the goddess asked Śiva: 'When will I see you?' Śiva replied: 'Once a year, on *makācivaṉrāttiri*, I shall come to the earth and appear before you.'

The *alaku niṟuttal*, then, portrays Śiva's union with the goddess. This explanation coincides with the statements of the Kīḻapāvūr and Āmūr *pūcāri*, both of whom connected the ritual to Śiva's appearance to the goddess during *makācivaṉrāttiri* - in these temples (and in all the other ones) no *maṇṭapam* with a light inside is set up simultaneously with the *alaku niṟuttal*.

Although this explanation may seem obvious at a first glance, it is not so at all. In Urappuḷi and Paramakkuḍi the *alaku niṟuttal* is the highlight of the festival. It is also performed during the fourth *cāmam*[2] of *civaṉrāttiri* (i.e., between three and six AM), but here (in both temples) Śiva has nothing to do with the ritual. It is through the grace of the goddess alone that the sword stands on the pot.

[1] '*pōyiṟṟuvā*' is the usual way of saying 'good-bye'.

[2] See p. 55, fn. 2.

If a *pūcāri* or devotee were at all to muse about the symbolism of the ritual, he may, of course, associate the sword with Śiva or another male deity and the pot with the goddess, but by no means does he need to give the two symbols these values. The pot, we have seen, can sometimes represent a male deity. The sword is the weapon *par excellence* of the goddess and it can, in fact, be identified with the goddess: Tukāī or Bhavānī of Tuljāpur appeared in Śivājī's dream and told him that she had become embodied in his sword 'Bhavānī'.[1] In all likelihood, however, neither *pūcāri* nor devotee will lose much thought on the masculinity or femininity of the sword or pot. What he is interested in is whether or not the sword stands.

It is absolutely essential that the sword remain upright on the pot. If the sword shows signs that it may not stand up, the *pampaikkārar* gets angry and shouts at the goddess, exhorting her to make the sword stand (Avan.). What happens, if the sword does not stand? 'It is a very bad sign, it never happens,' answered the priest of Avaṉāci. An older man volunteered: 'It happened a long time ago that the sword did not stand. Then the *pūcāri* cut off a part of his tongue and offered it to the goddess.'[2] Again, in the ritual, as it is performed in Avaṉāci, there is no sign of Śiva, the goddess alone causes the sword to stand. Why is Śiva implicated in the ritual in some temples and not in others? A simple reason may be that in most temples a union between Śiva and the goddess is not tolerated because the goddess is, after all, a virgin. A second reason lies in the ambivalence of the symbols themselves: if both the pot and the sword are associated with the goddess, the question of Śiva's presence at the ritual does not arise. Yet, regardless of what the person may think about the ritual, there are indications, other than those already mentioned, which would lend support to the idea that the *alaku niṟuttal* portrays a temporarily 'married' state of the goddess and again, depending on whether or not the goddess is at all allowed to have a consort, this marriage could be interpreted as an actual union of the goddess with a lover (husband) or

[1] Sontheimer (1976), p. 46.

[2] To make such an offering is called *pāvāṭam pōṭa*. The *pūcāri* of the Aṅkāḷamman temple of Āmūr elaborated: the piece of the tongue is first placed on a new *pāvāṭai* (a petticoat, a skirt) which is on top of a banana leaf. A *pūcai* is done. Then the tongue is put into a new pot filled with water and placed in front of the god Pāvāṭairāyaṉ. (Pāvāṭairāyaṉ, being the favorite son of Aṅkāḷammaṉ, may be considered the best 'person' to intercede with the goddess).

as a purely symbolic marriage, involving no male partner at all.[1] In Irukūr the goddess is dressed as a bride during the *alaku niṟuttal* (here called *cakti alaku niṟuttutal*). After the sword has been removed, the water, which was in the pot during the ritual, is distributed to women who wish to have children. Here, as in the temples of the Tirunelveli and Ramnad districts, the ritual is performed during *civaṉrāttiri*. In other temples, however, the *alaku niṟuttal* takes place the day after *makācivaṉrāttiri*, e.g., in Avaṉāci and Kāṅkaya nāṭu. Although Beck,[2] describing the Aṅkāḷamman festival of Kāṅkaya nāṭu, calls the ritual '*aḷaku terucaṉa pūjai*' ('*pūjā* for the beautiful appearance of god')[3] and although there the sword is 'laid across the top of the pot' (i.e., rather than made to stand upright), we are doubtlessly dealing with the same ritual, but with the following variation: on the previous day (i.e., *civaṉrāttiri*), a ceremony takes place in the temple, during which the goddess is 'invited to the battle-ground' and a special *pūcai* is offered to the bull which faces the shrine's entrance. Then 'a small camphor light is waved in front of the bull and it is said that this must be done in such a way that the goddess inside can see it.'[4] In Avaṉāci a statue of Nandin is especially made by the potter and brought into the temple on *civaṉrāttiri*; the *alaku niṟuttal* is performed the following day here as well.

It is tempting to see in Nandin a form of Śiva and to interpret the waving of the light in front of the bull as a sign that the goddess is allowed her secret meeting with her lover/husband on *civaṉrāttiri*,[5] even though the *alaku niṟuttal* is performed a day later. About the *alaku niṟuttal* (i.e., *aḷaku terucaṉa pūjai*) Beck says: 'Although informants are not explicit on this point, the symbolic enactment of a sexual union between the goddess and her lover/husband seems a reasonable interpretation

[1] Cf. the marriage of Basavis to the sword, or the sword replacing the husband at a wedding - Thurston (1906), p. 40-41. In Angalammagudur (Cuddapah distr. of Andhra), the goddess Aṅkāḷamman is once a year married to a sword. (The goddess does not have a husband and according to the informant, the wedding actually represents the handing over of the sword - symbol of her power with which she protects the village - to the goddess.)

[2] Beck (1968), p. 181

[3] The confusion between *l* and *ḷ* may have led to a re-interpretation of the word. The Avan. informant called the ritual *alaku taricaṉam* and explained it as 'causing-the-sword-to-stand ceremony'.

[4] Beck (1968), p. 180.

[5] The 'invitation of the goddess to the battleground' could speak against such an interpretation and Beck (p. 184) seems to see the *pūjā* to Nandin in the light of the 'battle in the graveyard' and not in connection with the *alaku niṟuttal*. It is well known though that the goddess won't 'marry' Śiva without fighting him first. Cf. Beck (1981), Shulman (1980), esp. p. 180 ff.

to make.'[1] When the devotees walk over the hot coals, the goddess should be cool, because she has to absorb the heat from the coals into herself so that the devotees will not be burned. To make her cool, butter in great quantities is applied to the *mūrtti* before the devotees go across the coals. The *alaku niṟuttal*, if symbolizing the sexual union of the goddess with her lover, would have the same effect, it would leave the goddess in a cool state: 'After the two have united, the body becomes cool ... When husband and wife stand separately, wanting to unite, because of the feeling the whole body becomes hot...'[2] Beck states: ...'the desire for a sexual partner is linked to an increase in bodily 'heat', but the aftermath of intercourse is considered cooling...'[3]

Depending on which aspect of a wedding or union of the goddess with her lover/husband is stressed, the *alaku niṟuttal* could be interpreted in terms of the state she is in before the union, i.e., her *tavam*, a state in which she is hot and full of potentially destructive power or the state she is in after the union, i.e., her cool state, her life-giving, fertile state. Whatever the initial intention of this ritual may have been, it is a ritual which, because of its symbols (the pot and the sword) which are ambivalent themselves and because of its 'magical' quality (the sword stands upright without support), can accommodate a variety of interpretations and a ritual which, if it represents a wedding of the goddess, can portray that idea without the need for an actual wedding ceremony or an involvement of a male deity.

5. *Kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* - walking over hot coals

As already mentioned, for Aṅkāḷammaṉ this ritual is practically confined to the Coimbatore district; it is, however, performed throughout Tamilnadu for various goddesses, the most popular among them being Māriyammaṉ and Draupadī. As part of the yearly Aṅkāḷammaṉ festival, the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* is celebrated towards the end of the festivities and a day or more after the *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*. The following is a short description of the ritual as it was performed in Āṉaimalai in February 1982, for Mācāṇiyammaṉ:

[1] Beck (1968), p. 184-185.

[2] O'Flaherty (1981), p. 319, citing: Egnor, Margaret Trawick, *The Sacred Spell and Other Conceptions of Life in Tamil Culture*, Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1978, p. 103.

[3] Beck (1969), p. 562. Cf. Beck (1968), p. 185 where Beck remarks on this cooling process in relation to the *alaku niruttal*.

On the day of the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*, those people who had vowed to walk over the coals assembled at the river at sunrise. After a bath in the river, they first lined up in rows in front of the *kumpam*, which had been set up in exactly the same way as it had been two days earlier following the *mayāṉa pūcai*. Then the priests repeated the same ritual actions: they tied the *kāppu*, performed a *pūcai*, etc. Then *vipūti* was distributed to the devotees. Many devotees carried red oleander (*araḷi* or *alari* - *nerium odorum*). In front of the temple a large crowd of onlookers had gathered in the meantime. Some men were still busy beating on the hot coals to even them out. The pit had been prepared on the previous day: two short walls of earth had been piled up parallel to each other, leaving a passage of ca. three meters width and ca. 20 meters length. Into this pit wood had been strewn and left to burn.[1] The devotees arrived from the river, each wearing a flower garland. They walked one behind the other to the temple, keeping the pit with the coals on their right. In the sanctum a *tīpārātaṉai* was done and each devotee received a flower hat on his head. Then they all lined up in front of the pit, facing the temple and its sanctum. The first to walk over the coals was the Kavuṇṭar (see ch. III, A. 3.3.a), followed by the Mutaliyār (both, possessed by the goddess, had danced in the temple while the flower hats were distributed). Before the Kavuṇṭar walked across, he threw some flowers onto the coals. One devotee after another walked or ran the length of the pit. At the other end of the pit, where the *tēr* stood, the devotees were given buttermilk (*mōr*) to drink (most probably because of its 'cooling' effect), then they entered the temple again. The smaller, upright *mūrtti* of the goddess (at the feet of the lying one) was covered with butter (this was later distributed as *piracātam*). Only men walked across the coals.[2] After all the men had passed, the women stood at the fringe of the pit and scooped up the coals with their hands and released them again. Some of the women poured the coals over their heads. This ended the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal*. The whole day the temple was crowded with devotees offering *pūcai* to the goddess and in the evening some people were still offering bananas and coconuts in the coal-pit and picking up the ashes to carry them home.

[1] When the devotees walk over the coals, there should be no fire anywhere between the coals and to avoid this, water is sprinkled over the coals.

[2] This is not a rule. In other places women are also allowed to walk over the coals (e.g., at the Māriyamman festival in Urappuḷi).

In the Coimbatore district, the *kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal* takes place at the Aṅkāḷamman̲ temples, but not at the Macāṉiyamman̲ temples (Iru., Culur, Pal.). In most temples it is the *pūcāri* who will walk over the coals first, in some cases, he balances the *kumpam* on his head while he goes across the pit (Pal., Kovai). The butter which is pasted on the *mūrtti* of the goddess is to make her cool: 'They say the fire is on the Amman̲'s head; when people walk over the fire, she takes the heat into herself and to cool her, we place the butter on her' (Kunna.). In some temples a goat will be offered when the *kuntam* is prepared (Avan.) or after the walking over the coals ceremony has ended (Orrai.).

One may ask why this ritual is so popular (at least 50 men took part in it at Āṉaimalai) despite its obvious danger. (It does happen that people get burned, especially should they happen to fall). No doubt the coals are hot. All the devotees walked over them at a fast pace, some ran and all had a concentrated, serious expression on their face. A possible answer is that, because it is such a difficult undertaking, it is a very powerful means by which the goddess can be made to fulfil one's wishes and furthermore it is a pledge which does not involve material expenditure (as e.g., the sacrifice of an animal, which poor people cannot afford to do.) Walking over the hot coals is also a means to gain religious merit (*puṇṇiyam, puṇya*) or, for some, to acquire prestige.[1]

6. *Pārivēṭṭai* (chase, hunting)

This ceremony (called *pārivēṭṭai, pārivēṭṭaiyāṭutal* or *parivēṭṭaiyāṭutal*) is of a somewhat mysterious nature. Oppert[2] describes a *pārivēṭṭai* as follows:

> 'At Mēlkōṭa a Holiya presents to Celvapillai, or utsava-idol, which is thus called as it is carried in procession at the festival, a branch of the Cami or Vahni tree to be used as an arrow for his bow at the hunting festival (*pārivēṭṭai*), and while the idol is moving in procession, a Pariah huntsman lets a hare run across the road in front of the car that the god may shoot at it; this done, the idol returns in grand procession to the temple..... This hunting festival is in Malayāḷam called *pallivetta*, or royal hunt. It is just possible that *pāri* and *palli* are identical words.'

[1] On this ritual see also Whitehead (1976), p. 79, 93 and Hiltebeitel (1982), p. 72 ff.

[2] Oppert (1893), p. 53 and also p. 100.

No doubt, the ritual is a hunt, but what is hunted, who is doing the hunting and how it is done varies from temple to temple. A *pārivēṭṭai* in a different form from the ones discussed below, is also celebrated in Andhra.[1]

The *pārivēṭṭai* is again not performed in all Aṅkāḷamman̲ temples; informants of the Coimbatore, Trichi, Madurai and Ramnad district mentioned it. In the Coimbatore district, the *pārivēṭṭai* takes place after the *kuntam iṟaṅkutal* (Iru., Avan., Orrai.). In Orraikkāḷmantapam the informant said that the *pārivēṭṭai* is to ward off the evil eye (*tiṣṭi* or *tiruṣṭi kaḷikka*): the ten chosen people dress themselves as hunters (*vēṭṭaikkārar*). With bow and arrow in their hands, accompanied by the musicians and bringing the *mūrtti* of the Amman̲ (Aṅkāḷamman̲) they go to an open area or field. There they place the goddess down and dance. Then they return to the temple. The next day, the *pillaippāvu* is performed. In Avanāci the *pārivēṭṭai* and the *pillaippāvu* are connected. The priest of this temple related: 'Once, the Amman̲ went hunting. She followed a deer (*mān̲*), but she could not catch it; however, she was able to cut off one of its ears. Some time later, the deer came into her fort (*kōṭṭai*), she caught it, opened its stomach, took out the intestines, put them around her neck and put the liver of the animal in her mouth.' - The goddess is brought to an open ground; she is accompanied by a man (of the Kottan̲ār - mason - caste) dressed up as hunter holding a bow and arrow. On that ground a small tank of earth is made, the *kan̲nimār*[2] are set up close to it and a *pūcai* is done. Then the ear of a goat is cut off and the goat is then beheaded. The goddess is brought back to the temple. Then the goat is skinned, the intestines and liver are removed. The man who before was the hunter changes his dress to that of a female, and the usual *pillaippāvu* ritual follows.

In the Trichi district, the *pārivēṭṭai* is combined with the destruction of the Vallāḷa *kōṭṭai* (see ch. III, A 3.10). In Āmūr the ear of a goat is cut off and placed into the fort.

In Paramakkuṭi (Ramnad district) the hunt is called *mān̲vēṭṭai* (deer hunt). The goddess is brought to the river on a *ciṅka vākan̲am*; there she is said to do the hunting. A gourd (*pūcanikkāy*) is sacrificed (in former times goats were sacrificed). The informant explained that the goddess goes hunting because she was brought up by a hunter. The hunter misbehaved and therefore, the goddess took the form of fire and engulfed him. The informant then remarked that in another temple one could see the statue of the goddess, spearing the hunter(!) who is lying at her feet (a reference

[1] See Murty/Sontheimer (1980), p. 163-184, at p. 173.

[2] The (seven) virgins. They were probably in the form of stones or made of earth modelled into cones.

to the goddess in the form of Durgā slaying the buffalo demon). We see in this example, how ritual, iconography and what may be a very ancient trait of the goddess, namely, that she is the goddess of hunters, have become intertwined. The same belief, that the goddess was originally a child of hunters, is current in Urappuli. There the goddess left the hunters because she did not like their non-vegetarian eating habits. Nevertheless, for the *pārivēttai* the goddess (*cāmi*) is taken to the river, where a pregnant goat is cut open, its liver taken out and roasted over a fire. This liver is offered to the goddess (*cāmi*) and then distributed to pregnant women and to children. It is certainly remarkable that the strictly vegetarian rules are only observed for the goddess inside the temple, what is done inside the temple seems to have no bearing on what is done outside the temple. In Urappuli Aṅkālamman is strictly vegetarian, but that does not prevent the sacrifice of a great number of goats during the festival for the goddess. This pattern: vegetarian inside the temple and non-vegetarian outside it, seems to prevail in many temples.

In the Maturai (Mad.Rl.) temple, *pārivēttai* is simply a goat sacrifice to the non-vegetarian gods, however, the sacrifice commemorates the goddess ' (*cāmi*) hunting expedition at midnight of the third day after *civanrāttiri*.

In Vālāntūr the *pārivēttai* is much more elaborate: the goddess is seated on a horse vehicle for the hunt. In a procession, joined by a large crowd of men dressed in yellow dhotis or pants of a particular pattern,[1] yellow turbans, carrying knives, or rods or sticks about one meter long, the goddess is brought to a nearby coconut grove. The hunter is a man whose face is painted red, on whose head is tied a band on which feathers are stuck, and who carries in his hand a bow and arrow, with the arrow tied to the stretched bow. As soon as the procession reaches the grove, the hunter runs about in the grove, here and there, pretending to hunt an animal. Then a small goat is brought to the grove and the hunter picks it up and carries it on his shoulder. A *pūcai* to the goddess is performed and the procession starts back to the temple. The goat is, as far as I know, not sacrificed to the goddess.[2]

[1] I have seen such pants worn by groups of devotees (Kallar?) of Alakarcāmi during the Cittirai festival in Maturai.

[2] The procession did on this occasion (1982) not return to the temple, but went to another temple to 'watch' the consecration of two new statues.

There is not much one can say about this ritual without a more detailed study of it. As the child of hunters, the goddess would probably enjoy a hunting expedition, and that her target is a deer makes sense (the goat being the substitute). In the *Cilappatikāram* there is the famous description of the hunters' (*eyiṉar*) songs and worship of their goddess who rides on a stag (*kalai*).[1] There are other signs which could possibly be interpreted as marks left on Aṅkāḷamman by hunter castes: she dresses herself in feathers; the *pampaikkārar* who take an active part in the ritual are often from the hunter caste (Vēṭar); or, in Tintivaṉam, some of the men, dressed up as gods, carried bow and arrow and they were called 'hunters' by the informant.

The hunt may simply be an expression of the goddess' victory over her enemies, a raid on the enemy fort or a sport, a royal hunt.[2]

7. *Teppam āṭutal, mañcaḷ nīr āṭutal, tēr*

Bringing the goddess to a river or tank, floating her in a boat on the water (*teppam āṭutal*), or bathing the goddess are rituals interspersed throughout the festival. Water is considered purifying and cooling. After the goddess returns from the cremation ground she always receives a bath. Before the devotees enter the hot coals, the goddess is brought to the river for 'bathing' (*nīr āṭutal*) (Iru.) or she is seated in a boat and floated on the river for a while (Orrai.). In Mēl Malaiyaṉūr the goddess' boatride is the last ride she gets during the festival. The boat is usually floated on the tank, but if there is not enough water, the boat is placed on a cart and pulled through the streets. With the *mañcaḷ nīrāṭutal* or turmeric bath, the festival usually comes to an end. After it, that is, after the *pūcāri* has removed the *kāppu* and the flag has been taken down, the non-vegetarian gods will receive their special *pūcai*. The *mañcaḷ nīr āṭutal* is a joyous occasion at which the villagers will throw turmeric water on each other. It is also a ceremony to avoid, because in some villages, e.g., Vālāntūr, turmeric water has been replaced by water colored red or blue and young men take great pleasure in throwing buckets full of it on each other, while those worried for their shirts, run for cover.

[1] Cilap. (1968), p. 312, line 33 (*uraippāṭṭu maṭai*) and p. 316, line 9 (*muṉṉilaippparaval*) of Ch. XII (*vēṭṭuvavari*).

[2] The *pārivēṭṭai* shows some similarities to the 'arrow-shooting ceremony' as it was performed on the Vijayadaśamī day by the Setupati of Ramnad - see Appadurai Breckenridge (1978), p. 86. Cf. also Biardeau (1981), p. 215-243.

The tēr or big cart, decorated with cloth, festoons, banana leaves, flowers and often rising up to a height of six or more meters, is pulled through the streets by the devotees themselves. It is a spectacle which draws large crowds to a village. The goddess sits inside the tēr. It is an inauspicious sign, if the tēr gets stuck on the way. Not all temples will have a tēr or *ratam* ceremony; the one in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr is widely advertised and the tēr is probably one of the bigger ones, if not the biggest in possession of any Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple. The tēr need not be, but is often one of the last 'items' on the festival list (in Āṉaimalai, e.g., the tēr goes around the streets on the day the *kuṇṭam* is prepared). In Teḷi the day of the tēr brought many families from other villages to the temple for the head-shaving and ear-boring ceremony. Goats and chickens were offered, families cooked rice and curries while some devotees fulfilled their vows by rolling around the temple on the ground.

'Feasting' is as much part of a festival as the rituals (see e.g., ch. III A. 3.1.d.). 'Entertainment' is also an integral part of a festival. Fire works, concerts, plays and dances are 'staged' for the goddess and add to the festive mood. In the villages, during the festival, a multitude of stalls spring up, selling anything from food, devotional articles to toys. The general mood of the Aṅkāḷammaṉ festivals which I saw was a combination of joy and earnestness; there was hectic activity, there were worried *pūcāri*, joyful spectators and serious devotees; the centre of the attention was always the goddess.

Apart from the big yearly festival, some temples will celebrate other important days of the Hindu festival calendar, e.g., *kārttikai tīpam* (palmyra leaves are burned in front of the temple, Tri.U., Muc.), *navarāttiri* (*pommai kolu* - decoration and setting up of 'dolls'), *tīpāvaḷi* etc. During the *navarāttiri*[1] celebrations in the Cūḷai Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple the *makiṣācura saṃhāram* (the destruction of Mahiṣāsura) is acted out. Two vehicles (*vāhaṉam*) are set up, on one is the goddess, on the other the buffalo demon. They are brought to a cross road near the temple. The Asura backs up some distance on the road, then charges the goddess and when he comes face to face with her, his head is 'cut off'. To show this, the head is simply removed from the statue. The Asura backs up again and charges again, the second time with a different head. Each time he loses a head; and the head is placed on the vehicle of the goddess. Each time his head is replaced (the heads

[1] In the month of Puraṭṭāci (Sept.Okt.), starting on the new moon day.

are those of an Asura, elephant, lion, tiger, buffalo, cow, boar and ram). At the last turn, the demon arrives without a head, mango leaves sprouting from his neck.

How many festivals and how elaborately they are celebrated depends on the wealth of a temple. Many Aṅkāḷamman̲ temples cannot afford even more than a special *pūcai* for the annual festival (e.g., Iro., Periak., Kamp., Venk., Kunna.).

IV. THE GODDESS AND HER DEVOTEES

The focus in this chapter, as opposed to the previous chapters, is on the relationship between the goddess and the individual. What we wish to describe and explore is how the devotee as an individual reacts to and interacts with the goddess and how she communicates her presence to the devotee, not - as we have seen already - with the purpose of establishing or strengthening a bond between her and a group of people, but in order to convey a message which concerns primarily the devotee and only secondarily the community. The first part of the chapter shows what kind of contacts exist between the devotee and the goddess outside of the ritual context. We shall see with what type of concerns the devotee addresses the goddess, how the goddess makes her wishes known to the devotee and how he interprets certain signs as a communication from the goddess. In the second part we will speak about the relationship between the devotee and the goddess within the ritual context. The focus thereby will be on the devotees on whom the goddess 'descends', on those who through the dance or by impersonating the goddess become her.

A. Means of communication.

The goddess, we know, causes and removes various types of ill-health. Much of the communication between devotee and goddess, therefore, revolves around health. The ashes, earth, etc. of the figure in the cremation ground have curative powers. Similarly, the earth of the termite hill is believed to be a remedy for various ills.[1] In Mēl Malaiyanūr, for instance, small pieces of the earth of the termite hill inside the sanctum are distributed to devotees as *piracātam*. The goddess' body is medicine. Aṅkāḷamman says she is the cure for the diseases sent by her sister (see Myth 10). When a devotee falls ill, he will pray to the goddess and usually vow that, should she cure him, he would make an offering to her.

[1] On the earth of the termite hill as medicine and its connection with fertility see König (1984), Ch. 3, 3.1.3 ff. and 3.1.12.2 ff.

Many instances were cited by informants of how the goddess had cured one or another devotee. According to a legend, the temple of Cūḷai received its land from a Moslem whom Aṅkāḷamman had cured of a severe stomach ailment. The most common way of thanking the goddess for having been healed is to present her with special food offerings. Another way (popular in Tiṇṭivanam, for instance) is to dress up as the goddess during the festival. It is also very common to offer the goddess a replica of the part of the body which she has healed. In Mēl Malaiyanūr the story is told that the goddess restored the sight of a blind girl after the girl had circled the temple for 46 (of the 48 stipulated) days. The girl then fulfilled her vow by offering the goddess an eye made of gold.[1]

The most frequent problems and prayers addressed to the goddess concern health. Ill-health is not just a problem of the body. Rather than attributing an illness only to physiological causes, the devotee will find the reasons for it in the sick person's transgression of rules of conduct (both in the social and religious context). If a wrong has been recognized and proper appeal is made to the goddess in the form of prayers, worship, etc., the ensuing illness can be remedied:

> 'A man had stolen some earth and was carrying it in a big vessel. Some passersby saw the vessel and noticed a snake inside it. They told the man about it. He dropped the vessel immediately. Then he spit blood. The others brought him to the temple. For one month he lay there and no doctor could cure him. One night a woman stroked his head. He called out; people came, but no woman was seen anywhere. The next day the man was cured.'
> (Cit.)

[1] In many temples one can buy tiny silver representations of eyes, legs, hands, etc. (I have seen such at Murukan temples and Māriyamman temples.) Bigger replicas of parts of the human body, formed of clay, are often sold during festivals in the Madurai District. Compare also Vālājāpēṭṭai (ch. III) where the women 'offer' their child or a substitute made of dough to the goddess during the *mayānakkoḷḷai*.

Health in the above sense encompasses the concept of a harmonious life - basically a life in which nothing is wanting and a life in which a person's social obligations can be fulfilled. In this context Aṅkāḷamman is worshipped particularly in connection with the well-being of the family and the clan. At the occasion of a life-cycle rite, the family will usually seek the blessing of its *kula teyvam*, even if this means travelling to a different village. Parents will ask the goddess to bless their daughter's or son's marriage; the bride's wedding necklace (*tāli*) will be brought to the temple to be blessed;[1] when a child is born, a special offering is made to the goddess; earboring and tonsure may take place at the temple, and, of course, women will ask the goddess for many sons.[2]

To 'heal' barrenness is one of the two important functions of Aṅkāḷammaṉ expressed in the core rituals. The other is to cure illnesses due to magic or the influence of malignant spirits. The latter function especially seems to have pushed her into the limelight and given her her distinguishing mark.[3] Much of the belief in Aṅkāḷammaṉ's power over spirits seems to be based on the affinity she herself shows with them. Devotees would never call her a '*pēy*', but in the myth about Vallāḷarājaṉ her behaviour is explicitely identified with that of a *pēy*.

In the following account Aṅkāḷammaṉ's image as a *pēy* becomes someone's nightmare:

> 'This happened in my father's grandfather's time. In those days the temple had no land. Īśvarī said to this big landlord (zamindar): 'You should give me some land. My children don't have land, they have no comfort, they cannot afford to perform the *pūcai*.' He said: 'Why should I give you any land?' (He had 200 acres of it.) Then Īśvarī said to the *pūcāri*: 'Continue to give this landlord *piracātam* every day and keep asking him for the land. Then tell me what he says.' In those days we used

[1] The wedding itself does not take place in the temple.

[2] A detailed study on how much Aṅkāḷammaṉ takes part in life-cycle rites, especially birth, and what ritual role she plays therein could not be included here. One such study which deals with the fertility-goddess Ṣaṣṭhī and childbirth is Kapp (1983).

[3] See the passage cited from the *Māriyammaṉ tālāṭṭu* in ch. I section B.3.3 and the songs in Ch. V, *patikam* v. 7.

to be very much afraid of the zamindar. 'Cāmi, I'm afraid to ask you... Īśvarī ordered me to ask you about some land,' the *pūcāri* said to the zamindar. He replied: 'What, every day you bring ash and *piracātam* and for that you want land? Go, or I will have you beaten up!' The *pūcāri* informed the goddess about this. That night, Īśvarī went to the zamindar's house with her trident, sat on his chest and said, choking him with her hand: 'If you don't donate any land, I will open your stomach, take out your intestines and wear them as garlands.' The zamindar cried out and fell from the cot. Then again she sat on his chest and said: 'Before you brush your teeth, sign a deed of land in my favour - you have to promise this. If not, I will wear your intestines as garlands.' The landlord, now frightened, promised: 'I shall not brush my teeth and eat[1] before I have written out the deed.' ... The land deed was signed. It was written that the land should be the property of Īśvarī for generations to come. From that time onwards the zamindar called his daughters 'Aṅkammā'. Even during my father's time we gave the zamindar's family *piracātam* every day. Now their 'palace' is gone and they are poor, but the land still belongs to the temple.' (Periak.)[2]

Informants of many temples related incidents in which a person who did not show the proper respect towards the goddess was punished by her. Some of the offenders even had to pay with their life for their sin.[3] Along with her punishment, the goddess may indicate her anger to the person by means of a particular sign. The following incident was related by the *pūcāri* of Āmūr. It occurred when his father was *pūcāri*.

'The *pūcāri* was making his rounds to collect rice for the goddess. He came to a certain Aiyar's house and when he asked for rice, the Aiyar said: 'I am not donating any rice, may your goddess

[1] i.e., he never eats his first meal before having brushed his teeth.

[2] In somebody else's dream the goddess chases the nightmare. The *pūcāri* from Muciri related that once a huge black figure appeared in his dream. It sat on his chest and started to crush him. Then he shouted 'Aṅkāḷ-amman'. The goddess appeared to him as a young girl, decorated with flowers. She blew the big black figure away.

[3] Cf. Valpt. and Mad.Gu., ch. III (p. 109, fn. 1; p. 150, fn. 1). On the idea that the goddess has to be respected and that she punishes offenders see also Jain (1973), p. 160.

be buried (i.e., die).' A few days later, the wife of the Aiyar fell down the steps from the terrace, hit her head and had to be hospitalized. Shortly afterwards she died. The Aiyar, ready to repent for his remarks, bought some milk to be turned into curds as offering for the goddess. The next morning, when he inspected the curds to see if they were ready, he saw blood in them. He then bought some flowers and fruits and came to the temple to offer them to Aṅkāḷamman. When the *pūcāri* opened the door to the sanctum, a snake was hissing beside the sword of the goddess. The Aiyar was 'thrown back' with fear. The following days a cold and fever kept him at home. Afterwards he worshipped the goddess with fruits and flowers every day.'

The curds, a substance which should cool the goddess' anger, are rejected by her. The blood signifies the heat, the anger of the goddess; it is also an expression of her having been 'wounded'.

The snake, which here appropriately hisses beside the sword, is very frequently the messenger of the goddess. It is - apart from the more direct means of communication such as dreams or possession - the most common medium through which the goddess signals her pleasure or displeasure. How the appearance of a snake is interpreted depends, of course, on the circumstances under which the snake is seen. In the following two stories the snake communicates in the one case an offense done to the goddess, in the second a transgression of a custom.

The *pūcāri* from Pērūr related that once a person from a distant place had come to the temple to worship the goddess. Even though it was a time when the sanctum should have been closed (between noon and five in the afternoon), the *pūcāri* decided to perform the *pūcai*. As usual he washed his feet. Then he entered the sanctum together with his brother. After he had switched on the light, his brother pointed to the wet footmark the *pūcāri* had left as he had entered. There lay, close to it, a cobra. The *pūcāri* immediately lit some camphor, worshipped the snake and the goddess and begged the goddess to forgive him for having entered the sanctum at a time when it ought to have remained closed.

The *pūcāri* regarded the incident as a double-blessing from the goddess. Firstly, he saw in the cobra immediately a manifestation of the goddess and since (as he said) it is rare that the cobra shows itself, he felt blessed by its sight and secondly, he felt blessed because the cobra had not bitten him, i.e., the goddess had not punished him.

The second story is from Civarakkōṭṭai.

'It once happened that the *pūcāri* made two sets of *poṅkal* on *civaṉrāttiri* instead of one. - He made the second set as a special favour for some families. This he should not do because it will cause animosity among the people instead of unity - (Informant's explanation). Many people, therefore, felt that this was wrong. When the *pūcāri*'s mother went to the cotton field, she saw a snake at its border. She walked around the field to enter it at a different spot, there again was a big snake. This occurred two or three days in a row. Finally the *kōṭaṅki* (diviner) was called. He explained to them the wrong the *pūcāri* had done. The *pūcāri* had to go to the temple, atone and pay the fine decided upon by the temple committee. The snake disappeared.'

The goddess communicates with the devotee not only in order to point out an offense, and the snake is not the only vehicle through which the goddess signals her nearness to the devotee. One informant (Mad.Rl.) called the snake the *vaḻikāṭṭi* of the goddess. '*vaḻikāṭṭi*' means 'one who shows the way'. When the devotee is in difficulty, when he is 'lost', the goddess shows him, through a sign, the way or the right course of action.

The *pūcāri* of the Vālācāpāt temple explained that in 1982 he did not have any money to celebrate the yearly festival. In a last effort to try to raise money he apparently had gone to Māmallapuram to fish. He was not very successful and tired, he sat down under a tree and fell asleep. Suddenly he felt something pushing against his back, but too tired to open his eyes, he dozed off again. When he woke up a short while later, he saw a cobra in front of him, its hood spread. The snake moved its head a few times and then disappeared. The *pūcāri* took this as a sign from the goddess that he should celebrate the festival and that the money could somehow be raised. He borrowed

some money from his brother and had the festival notices printed.[1]

> 'The goddess will help you if you worship her. She may help you through some other person or she may take another form - the form of a cow or a dog - to help you. Once we had to go to a particular village. It was night and we were frightened. As we walked along the path, we prayed to the goddess. Suddenly a white dog appeared in front of us. We lost all fear. We realized that it (the dog) was the goddess (*cāmi*) giving us company. We followed the dog, and when we reached the border of the other village, the dog suddenly disappeared.' (Mad.Rl.)

The identification of the dog with the goddess may seem somewhat unusual. We remember, however, that the dog is an important animal in the cult of Śiva Bhairava,[2] and in Myth 6 we were told that the goddess was once born as a dog.

A very common mode in which the goddess speaks to her devotees is the dream.[3] Informants said that when she appears in their dreams, it is in the form of a beautiful young girl. One story about a dream comes from Rātāpuram: It happened when the informant's grandfather was a young boy. His duty then was to attend to the *mūrtti* of the goddess. The *pūcāri* had asked him to clean the statue of the goddess. The boy took a brick and scrubbed the back of the *mūrtti*. That night the Amman appeared in the *pūcāri*'s dream. She showed him her back and said: 'Look what this fellow has done, my back is full of blood!'

Many informants pointed out that this type of communication between goddess and devotee used to be much more common 'in the olden days'. Many deplored the fact that the goddess had become 'silent' and that she could not be seen walking through the streets at night anymore. Some stated as a reason for this the general decline of devotees' love

[1] The *pūcāri* also mentioned that around midnight he usually feels a pressure in his body. He said that it was the goddess who thus made her presence known.

[2] Cf. Sontheimer (1984) - *Anthropos* 79, p. 163 ff. On the iconography of Bhairava see Shastri, K. (1974), p. 115 ff.

[3] A number of informants were very much surprised when they heard that Aṅkāḷamman had not appeared in my dreams.

for the goddess and a lack of sincere worship of her;[1] others resignedly attributed it to the *kaliyukam*.

A very different way of 'being in touch' with the goddess is through impersonation.

B. Possession and impersonation

In connection with the *pillaippāvu* (ch. III, 5.3.) we have shortly remarked that a distinction has to be made between those persons who dress up as the goddess because it is part of the particular role or function they fulfil in the ritual and those persons who do so in fulfilment of a vow. In the following pages we want to have a closer look at this distinction and in doing so say a few words about possession and *pakti* (*bhakti*).

As we have seen in the core rituals, those people who are chosen to play the role of the goddess in the ritual are often, but not necessarily always, dressed up as the goddess. What seems to be important is not the costume (*vēṣam*), but that the chosen person (most of the time it is the *pūcāri*) act the part of the goddess. Ideally this person should be possessed by the goddess. This possession ought to coincide with the person's role and therefore it is steered. It is induced at the appropriate moment by means of a blood sacrifice (e.g., Valpt.) or through an acceleration of the rhythm of the drums; it is lessened (if the possession becomes too violent) with the application of sacred ash or by placing a lime into the mouth of the possessed; it is intensified again through an acceleration of the drum beats. Inducing possession certainly does not always work, and although it is desired that the person be possessed for his role, it is in fact not absolutely necessary. Whether the person is possessed or not has no bearing on the fact that he is considered to be the goddess while he acts her part, and since he is the goddess, he may as well be called possessed by her. Yet judging from the efforts which are made to get the person possessed and from the importance which is attached to

[1] The informant from Kampam said, when asked why no festivals are celebrated for the goddess anymore: 'I don't know. Everyone has left her (the goddess).' The *pūcāri* of the temple at Tañcāvūr said that devotees lacked faith.

possession, one can surmise that in the truly possessed person the goddess' power (*cakti*) is more fully exhibited.[1] (The signs of possession usually are: a trembling and shaking body, erratic movements often followed by an inability to stand upright, eyes that are fixed or unfocussed.)

The person chosen to represent the goddess is the only one whose possession is encouraged and welcomed. It happens frequently, however, that also devotees who actively participate in a ritual (e.g., those who walk over the hot coals) or even those who simply are spectators get possessed. Their possession is spontaneous, it can happen at any moment and no effort is made on the part of others to induce it. While the possession of the first mentioned devotees (those who participate in a ritual) is not discouraged, that of the second is. The possession of the bystander will be stopped by the application of sacred ash on his forehead and he will be led away quickly.[2] The reason for this may conceivably be the belief, on the one hand, that the power of the goddess might harm a person (and through that person others) who has not undergone certain initiatory rites (e.g., fasting, tying of the *kaṅkaṇam*) which those who participate in the ritual have, or, on the other hand, that the person may be possessed by another (maybe conflicting) force or deity.[3] In opposition to the person acting as goddess, these devotees are usually not, as far as I know, worshipped as the goddess when they are possessed.

Whether the person who is the goddess is truly possessed or not, an essential way of acting the part of the goddess is to dance. 'Dancing the god' is an important feature of many cults still today,[4] and the often quoted

[1] Informant (2) of Āṉaimalai said that the person he had chosen as his successor (to act the part of the goddess during the *mayāṉa pūcai*) did not have enough *aruḷ* (grace = possession) while performing. He meant that the goddess' power did not show itself enough.

[2] This is based on my own observations.

[3] Cf. Kjoerholm (1982), p. 190-191: The sudden possession of a woman by Kālī during a Murukaṉ festival 'was apparently considered to be rather inconvenient by those in charge of the worship, and the woman was gently led away'.

[4] The most well-known and probably most elaborate form of 'god-dancing' being the *teyyāṭṭam*.

dance of the Vēlaṉ attests to the long tradition of 'dancing the god' in the Tamil-speaking area.[1] As we have already noted, the person who carries the *kapparai* dances (cf. Valpt.). Similarly the person who is garlanded with the intestines and holds the winnowing fan dances. During the *mayāṉa pūcai* in Āṉaimalai, the young man danced on the figure in the cremation ground. This dance is, of course, a way in which the power of the goddess manifests itself in the devotee (in which case it is synonymous with possession), or it is an imitation of the goddess' own dance.

The goddess' state during the core rituals is one of madness. She is described as being like a mad dog, as being in a frenzy (*veṟi*) when she goes to the cremation ground (see Valpt., ch. III.3.1.c). She is overcome with madness (*pittu*) when she eats the dead bodies (ch. III.5.2.2.). In this state of madness she dances (ch. III.B.1 and B.2.2); she dances possessed by the terrible frenzy (*pēy veṟi*) (ch. III.3.5, Valpettai). This frenzied dance of the goddess, her intoxication and madness reflect the devotee's possession by the goddess.

This intoxication, madness, the state of being possessed, filled by the presence of the god, was also an experience expressed by the Tamil bhakti poets. The words *'veṟi'*, *'pittu'*, *'pēy'* and *'āṭa'* occur in that context.[2] There is, however, a difference in the way possession is used by a person actually personifying a particular deity (e.g., Aṅkāḷ-amman) and in the way the Tamil bhakti poets use it. Yocum[3] points out this difference when he says: 'In no case does Māṇikkavācakar - or any other devotee - use his possession as a means for divination, curing, or mediumship. Māṇikkavācakar's possession, his god-intoxication, has no reference to third parties. It is solely the manifestation of his communion with Śiva, which is an end in itself.'

The person who plays Aṅkāḷamman or Pēcci during the ritual is for that time the vessel for the power (*cakti*) of the goddess. He

[1] Cf. Ramanujan (1981), p. 115 ff., Yocum (1982), p. 191 ff.

[2] Cf. Ramanujan (1981), p. 117 ff., Yocum (1982), p. 180 ff. (On *veṟi* see Yocum p. 190 and p. 204 fn. 42, on *āṭa* Yocum p. 203 fn. 38.) Cf. *Tiruvācakam* IV. 59 ff. in Pope (1970), p. 34-35 and Ramanujan's translation (1981), p. 118-119.

[3] Yocum (1982), p. 193. Cf. Ramanujan (1981), p. 119.

does not act on his own volition, he is not in control of himself. It is the goddess who leads him and causes him to act.[1] Through him the goddess communicates to and interacts with the devotee. What otherwise is the role of the *pūcāri*, of the priest, has been eliminated. The devotee receives the *piracātam* (the *vipūti*) directly from the goddess (i.e., from the person being the goddess), he makes his offering directly to her and he worships the goddess who is manifest in and acts through the person who plays or dances the goddess. As opposed to 'god-dancers' of other cults,[2] oracular predictions are usually not made by persons playing Aṅkāḷamman or Pēcci during the ritual. (Such predictions occur during the festival for Aṅkāḷamman, but they happen within a particular context and can then be made by any possessed devotee.) Nevertheless, the person being the goddess mediates, his actions benefit a third party.

While Yocum's distinction thus applies to one person acting the goddess, namely the one who has been chosen for that role, it does not hold true for another person acting the goddess, namely the devotee who fulfills his vow by dressing himself as goddess. He is not generally considered a medium, nor is he worshipped as the goddess. The motive behind his impersonation is for personal ends. His act is of a devotional nature, it is a sacrifice, an offering to the goddess. It is a means by which he worships the goddess. One could even go so far as to say that by impersonating the goddess he gives himself up to the goddess, sacrifices himself for her. He wants to please her, show his appreciation to her for the help she has accorded him. His choice in fulfilling his vow by dressing up as the goddess, rather than by another sacrificial offering, is perhaps motivated by his desire to invite the goddess to take hold of him, to take possession of him the way the bhakti poets hoped to be possessed by their god.

Why is the goddess described as mad, as possessed? In one myth she is, of course, truly possessed: when the *piramakapālam* catches hold of her hand, the '*pēy*' which had caused Śiva to roll in the cremation grounds, which had caused Śiva's madness, takes hold of her.

[1] Informants stated that the possessed person 'does not know what he is doing'. Cf. ch. III.A 3.3.b, fn.; ch. III.A 3.4. (Perumpākkam); ch. III. A 3.1.c. *pūcāri*'s explanation of the *kapparai* (Valpt.).

[2] Cf. Klimkeit (1976), p. 567.

Māṇikkavācakar calls Śiva a madman (*pittaṉ*) in several of his hymns,[1] and Yocum points out that Śiva's image (as the one who wears garlands of skulls and entrails, who dances in the cremation ground with the demons, who is clad in tiger and elephant skins etc.) and his actions (his behaviour at Dakṣa's sacrifice) are partly responsible for this.[2] Yocum sees a relationship between Śiva's 'capricious behaviour at Dakṣa's sacrifice and his periodic revelations to and abandonment of Māṇikkavācakar ...'.[3] The most important aspect of Śiva's image as madman seems to be that it encompasses the idea of transcendence. Yocum writes: 'Basically, Śiva both symbolizes in himself and offers his devotees participation in a new kind of consciousness, a type of consciousness opposed to ordinary modes of experience. In this mystical state of awareness, not just social hierarchy and egotism are abandoned, but necessity, purpose, and volition based on the choice between a variety of options have also been eliminated. Such utter spontaneity is incomprehensible to most of us, and perhaps madness is quite a profound image of what it must be like.'[4]

Could this statement be applied to Aṅkāḷammaṉ? Certainly her image and behaviour are just as mad as Śiva's, and the bestowal of her grace is probably experienced by her devotees as equally arbitrary.[5] Perhaps, the devotee who fulfills his vow by dressing as the goddess or by walking over the hot coals does not seek to attain a 'mystical state of awareness', but when he feels the power of the goddess on him, he does partake of a state of consciousness which is out of the ordinary; he experiences the goddess' madness.

The references to Aṅkāḷammaṉ's madness, intoxication, etc. occur in a particular context, namely, when she is in her true form, her *akōra* form, in her most violent form. Significantly she changes into this form when she is angry. In one version of the Brahminicide myth (ch. III, B.1 - Cūḷai) it is said that Parvatī was in such a rage that she wanted

[1] Yocum (1982), p. 144; *Tiruvācakam* 11.62; 12.34; 30.5; 37.31 in Pope (1970).

[2] Yocum (1982), p. 144 ff.

[3] ibid., p. 147.

[4] ibid., p. 148.

[5] Cf. also *patikam* V, 9 and 10.

to eat dead bodies and put their intestines around her neck. Her anger leads her in the Vallāḷa myth to violently remove the child from the queen's belly and to sack the king's town. In the Dakṣa myth she beheads her father. In all the three myths associated with the core rituals the goddess is involved in a violent act. It is very possible that the goddess' power can only arise out of an act of violence. Both Hart and Shulman have pointed out that violence and power were regarded as intimately linked by the indigenous Tamils.[1] However, what may be important here is not so much the violence of her act or the act itself, as the state the goddess is in when she performs the act. She is then called 'mad', 'possessed'. This state of madness or frenzy may well have been experienced by the heroic warrior, the *vīraṉ* on the battlefield. This same state may be brought about by an excess of an emotion (e.g., anger). It is a state in which extraordinary powers may become unleashed; a state in which the normal boundaries are destroyed or transcended, in which the impossible becomes possible. In other words, the violent act of the goddess may not be a means in itself but a sign of her power.

Is it not the *akōra* goddess, in her state of frenzy, who is depicted in the core rituals? Is it not this fully destructive power of the goddess which is changed into a positive power during the ritual? The devotee hopes to profit from this power. When he walks over the hot coals, when he dances the whole day in the heat, dressed in a costume, when he pierces his cheeks with long silver needles[2] (and when he - possessed - eats dead bodies?), he exhibits the power of the goddess or the goddess displays her power through him. If the goddess descends on the devotee and takes possession of him, if she bestows on him her grace (*aruḷ*),[3] the devotee shares this state of madness of the goddess. With her grace, with her power he would be able to transcend the ordinary, he would be able to transform himself (thus the *vēṣam* could be regarded as an outer symbol for an inner transformation).

[1] Hart 'The Nature of Tamil Devotion' (1979), p. 12-15. Shulman (1980), p. 91 ff.

[2] In Āṉaimalai one of the devotees who walked across the hot coals had pierced his cheeks with silver needles and tied a lime on each of the two needles. Such and other practices (e.g., hookswinging) are popular in a number of cults. Cf. e.g., Sontheimer (1984) 'Dasarā...', p. 13 ff.

[3] *aruḷ* = 'grace' is a term used by informants to signify that the goddess has taken possession of a person.

Whether the devotee celebrates the goddess by performing extraordinary feats or whether he honours her by being a medium to benefit others, he will ask for her help - her grace. In turn he will offer her his devotion, his love. He will be her *paktar* (bhakta).

V. SONGS IN PRAISE OF AṄKĀḶAMMAṆ (LITERATURE)

Introduction

Written texts in Tamil on Aṅkāḷammaṉ (i.e., songs or prayers, puraṇas, etc.) are scarce. A few songs, a longer poem of ten verses and a play, was the only published material I could find. The Cempaṭavar *pūcāri* of Rāṭāpuram recited a few verses of what they called 'Aṅkāḷi puraṇam', not extant, so they said. (This does not rule out the possibility that a palm-leaf manuscript of such a purāṇa may still exist somewhere in Tamilnadu). The play, called *Aṅkāḷa paramēsvari makattumennum paramacivam piramma cirañkoyta tūruvācar paṅka nāṭakam*, by V.R.P. Nārāyaṇacāmi Tācaṉ[1] tells the story of Śiva's brahminicide and the subsequent establishment of Aṅkāḷammaṉ in Mēl Malaiyaṉūr. The play is usually performed by the Campaṭavar of Mēl Malaiyaṉūr once during the annual festival.[2] The Aṅkāḷammaṉ *patikam* (see below) was published already in 1923 (B. Irattiṉanāyakar and Sons, Madras), a recent edition of it is in *Muppatu cillaraik kaṭṭaṭam* (Ār. Ji. Pati Kampeṉi, Madras).[3] In a list of books available in the Tamilnadu Archives appears an *Aṅkāḷammaṉ pērilum maturai vīracuvāmi pērilum patikam*;[4] this book could unfortunately not be located in the Archives. A number of songs in praise of Aṅkāḷammaṉ exist. The few examples which I have chosen are all from the booklet: *Pūcārip pāṭṭu* (Caṉmukāṉanta Puttakacālai, Madras - no date).

These songs and the *patikam* give us a good idea of the themes associated with Aṅkāḷammaṉ, e.g., the myth of Śiva's brahminicide, the cremation ground, etc. Very broadly speaking, they mirror what is being transmitted in the corpus of myths: to the poet/devotee the goddess is as much Kālī as she is Pārvatī, she is the universal Śakti and she is the personal, the *iṣṭa devatā*. Appeal is made to her as the mother who loves and protects her children (the devotees). The bhakta compares himself to a dog (*patikam*, v. 8),[5] to a

[1] Published in 1962, Caṉmukāṉanta puttakacālai, Madras.

[2] For a short synopsis of the play and the play's performance, see Meyer (1984).

[3] Published in 1979 (at p. 113). The translation follows the newer edition; variant readings of the older edition have been given in brackets.

[4] Tarumaṭācap pillai - dated: 1873.

[5] Māṇikkavācakar frequently compares himself to a dog (*nāy*), cf. *Tiruvācakam* V. 13, V.23, V.28, VIII. 4, VIII.5, VIII.7, etc. (Pope's edition and translation). Cf. also Sontheimer (1984 - Dasarā at Devaragudda), p. 16-17.

child (*patikam*, v. 5), with simple mind and ignorant of the more sophisticated forms of worship, he begs for the goddess' grace (*patikam* v. 9).[1] To be granted the goddess' grace, that is the devotee's highest hope; it is through her grace alone that the devotee 'lives' and attains release from the cycle of rebirths.

The translation of the *patikam* and the songs presented some problems because of the multitude of printing (spelling) mistakes and the poets' usage of some uncommon expressions. The reader/Tamil scholar may therefore excuse the few discrepancies which remain in the English texts. (The Tamil texts are included in the appendix). I am very grateful to Dr. K. Paramasivam, American College, Maturai, for helping me with the translation and to Dr. A. Dhamotharan, Heidelberg, for his very valuable comments and suggestions to the translation.

[1] Compare to this verse one of Cokhāmelā's songs:

'We know neither science nor Purāṇas
We know nothing about the words of the Vedas
The intricacies of the Āgamas and the secrets of the Nigamas
And all the truths contained in the Śāstras, we do not know!
Of Yoga and of sacrifices, of the eight spiritual paths,
Of alms, of vows and austerities, we know nothing!
Says Cokhā, O God, in my candid devotion,
I'll simply sing Your Name, O Keśava!'

From: Charlotte Vaudeville, *Cokhāmelā, an Untouchable Saint of Maharashtra*, in: *SOUTH ASIAN DIGEST OF REGIONAL WRITING*, vol. 6 (1977), (1981).

Malaiyaṉūr Aṅkāḷamman̲ *patikam*[1]

1

You came to prosperous Malaiyaṉūr and
settled in the 56 countries everywhere.
You bestow abundant wealth, sons and victory
to those at your feet, your devotees.
In your entourage is Vīrapatran̲, the lord of *dharma*,
great hero of battles, and able Irulappan̲,
Pavaṭairāyan̲ as well, who won all the victories.
Surrounded by the great leaders of demons
you sit, like a king, benevolently.
Mother, Cuntari,[2] Vimali,[3] Ampikai,[4] ornamented lady,
you, whose palm is decorated with the skull.
Kāḷi, who graciously gives the sacred ash by which the
diseases of your suffering devotees fly away.

Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Puṅkāvaṉam.

2

There is beauty in the sound of your *pāṭakam*,[5] your *vaṇṭayam*[5]
and your other anklet with the small bells.
There is beauty in the lustre of the small metal belt
which covers your waist decked out in silk.
There is beauty in your breast-band and your body which is intelligence,[6]
perfumed with the scents of musk, civet and sandal.
There is beauty in the bracelet on your red arm, and in the nine jewels
and the diamond, and in your moon-like forehead with its pendent.
There is beauty in your necklace, the *maṅkiliyam*[7]
as precious as the world and combined with pearl ornaments.
There is beauty in your kind words and in your lotus-face
framed by the lock of hair falling over your ear.
Aṅkāḷi, you bestow your grace at the right time upon the devotees
who come near you and worship you.

Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Puṅkāvaṉam.

3

you are Vāmi,[8] Kāmi,[9] Māl,[10] Śiva and Ayaṉ,[11]
you are Kāmāṭci who has greatness.
you are Maṅkaicivakāmi,[12] you are the younger sister of Māyavaṉ,[13]
you are the eternal formlessness, the embodied one, and the free space.
you are the beautiful *Svarūpam*, you are the night and the day,
you are the guru *namacivāya*.[14]
you are Kāḷi who dances with the dancing Śiva,
you are the one united with Śiva.
you have the form of the Ōm mantra, Caṅkari.[15]
you hold in one hand the *kapālam*,
in one hand the *cūlam* and in one hand the *pampai*[16]
and you extinguish for ever the *karma* of your devotees
on earth and give them life,
you of great wealth and purity.
Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Pūṅkāvaṉam.

4

Māl, Ayaṉ and Śiva, the 33 crores Taṉavar[17]
and the Māmuṉivar[18] and the regents of the (8 cardinal) directions,
the Vasus and the Bhairavas and the
ever-living five Pāṇṭavar,
superior Śāstā[19] and Gaurī, the beautiful-eyed one,[20]
the younger brother of the elephant-faced one,[21]
the seven (types of) clouds of the (celestial) women and the Mātṛkās
and Mārimuttu whose fame is praised -
for all these you have come, sitting in state like a king,
and wait that they praise you.
To all who have gathered,
will it be easy to proclaim your greatness at length?
Will there be anything more wonderful than you in this world,
in this *kaliyukam*?
Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Pūṅkāvaṉam.

5

How many are they who will come and worship
in the sanctum of the goddess who is even
praised by the supreme being.
Apirāmi, the Mothers (*ammaiyarkaḷ*), the sun, the moon,
fire, Yama, Nṛtti, and Varuṇaṉ,
Muttukkaruppaṇṇaṉ, Kuperaṉ, all these
and the 33 crores of Devas.
You are the first; the one who bestows boons which are
thought of by the pure mind, which you gave (us) before;
your acts will not be done (by anyone else).
No other than you is a true help to me.
Am I not your child?
Your will is my fortune, thus I believed, I believed
and your heart showed mercy.
Although I am without wisdom, you accept me as your slave (devotee) -
you will indeed acquire merit.

Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Puṅkavaṉam.

6

With a thousand faces and two thousand hands
you supported the armies that went to battle.
Warring Vīrpatraṉ, praised in the three worlds,
and Iruḷappaṉ who has a unique army,
Pāvaṭairāyaṉ who is celebrated in the whole world,
Celli, Kaṭṭeri and Umā,
and your excellent army and entourage,
by these you are especially surrounded.
With a rejoicing heart you came into my house
and settled to stay.
Will the results of *karma* remain?
What is the wrong I did in my previous birth, mother,
fully and beautifully ornamented one, in whose face fame spreads
and who is decked out in red.

Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Puṅkavaṉam.

7

The various spells of witchcraft,[22]
burning in the head, leprosy, stomach pain,
cold affecting the nose, acute pain, fever, cough,
that which induces one to falsehood, madness (lunacy) and consumption,
faults due to the negative influence of planets, and the *karma* of
previous bad deeds, all these
Mother, react like the dew when it sees the sun,
when your name is said, Dēvi.
Sister of Mātavaṉ,[23] mighty one who carries the *cūlam*
and who killed Vallāḷaṉ,
mother-goddess, who dances in the cremation ground, fierce one,
Varāki,[24] form of the mantra,
lady of the demons,[25] goddess of the Vedas,
you are adored and worshipped in the form of Aṅkāḷa.
Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Puṅkāvaṉam.

8

Boundary spirits, spirits of the barren land,
the Vīraṉ with the old, beautiful bow of loose string,[26]
the Muṉis[27] with matted hair who go against each other
and the Brahmarākṣasis,
the mischief-causing Kuṭṭiccāttis,[28]
the Mōkiṉis[29] with mean intentions, together with blood(-loving) Cāmuṇṭi,
all the demons and Vetālas,[30] etc. -
they will run away screaming when your holy ash is taken
and cast upon them.
Everyone will praise your wonderfulness.
Forgive the mistakes which this one, who is like an uneducated dog, made.
First cause, who bestows a favorable glance,
support of everything, Abundance, Nārāṇi,[31] Ārāṇi,[32]
Kāmi, Apirāmi, Vāmi -
grant me life, so that I may not praise those
who join the side of the wicked miser.
Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Puṅkāvaṉam.

9

I don't know Tantra, I don't know how to pronounce mantras,
I don't know (how to perform) *tavam*, I don't know (the yoga of) the body,
I don't know how to worship at your feet with fresh flowers,
I don't know the Campratāya,[33]
I don't know how to praise you with contemplation,
repetition of prayers and wisdom,
I don't know how to chant in your Centamiḻ.[34]
Nevertheless, it is your duty to think of me.
(but) what will I achieve saying this?
Cantiracēkari, Gaurī, lady with the matted hair, three-eyed one,
Cāmpavi,[35] Varāki, Nīli,[36]
Makammāyi,[37] lady of the four Vedas, fountain of grace,
Cāmuntikā, Kapāli,
Kamali with red feet, Nimali,[38] who,
with your dance of *mukti*, gave life to smart Mahiṣa.

Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Pūṅkāvaṉam.

10

The Āgamas which are famous in the world,
the 64 arts known to the sages, the great 96 tattvas,
the 18 Purāṇas and the Āraṇyakas, these you are.
Goddess, you are the essence of the four beneficient Vedas.
Forgive the worthless words which I say into your ear.
May you be very much pleased in your heart and bestow grace.
Goddess on the lotus, Nīli,
fountain of grace, with a soft hand and
whose speech is sweet and mild.
You are Ammaicivakāmi, who is praised by the people of the world,
mercyful Ōṅkāḷi.
The poets worship your lotus feet.
You are the *vintu* and the *nātam*,[39]
you are the end of knowledge - Aṅkāḷi.

Śakti of the (syllable) Ōm, who dwells in the shade of the flowergarden
Mother Pūṅkāvaṉam.

Footnotes to: 'Malaiyaṉūr Aṅkāḷamman patikam

[1] A poem in praise of a deity consisting of 10 stanzas.

[2] Fem. of Cuntaraṉ (Śiva) - 'beautiful one'.

[3] One free from *malam* (stain), 'pure one'.

[4] Ambikā

[5] type of anklet

[6] *cittāṅku - cittam - aṅkam* ('siddha' body), *cittu - aṅkam*, as *citturu* ('god as embodiment of intelligence' - TL)?

[7] The marriage symbol worn around the neck.

[8] 'Beautiful one'.

[9] Fem. of Kāmaṉ, god of love

[10] Viṣnu

[11] Brahmā

[12] The consort of Śiva in Citamparam.

[13] Viṣnu

[14] The mantra: 'Ōm namaḥ Śivāya'.

[15] Fem. of Caṅkāraṉ, 'destroyer'. Variant reading: ...goddess of the sound 'hrīm'.

[16] Cf. introduction to Ch. I.

[17] Asuras or Vidyādharas

[18] Great sages or ascetics

[19] Aiyaṉār

[20] Variant reading: ...one with three eyes.

[21] i.e., Murukaṉ

[22] What exactly each spell is, I am unable to determine.

[23] Viṣnu

[24] Wife of Viṣnu as boar *avatāra*

[25] *pūtam* can mean 'demon' or 'element'.

Footnotes to: Malaiyaṉūr Aṅkāḷamman *patikam* (cont.)

[26]The meaning of this line is not clear.

[27]'Muṉi' often denotes a dangerous or 'malevolent' deity.

[28]Small female spirits.

[29]Female spirits, said to entice men at night.

[30]A spirit, especially one occupying a dead body.

[31]i.e. Nārāyaṇī

[32]Goddess of the *āraṇyaka*, or goddess of the Vedas

[33]Prescribed rules, doctrine of tradition.

[34]'Pure' or 'high' Tamil

[35]Śāmbhavī

[36]Black one.

[37]Name for Māriyammaṉ

[38]i.e., Nirmali

[39]According to the Śaiva Siddhānta system Nāda is the first *tattva* which evolves out of *śuddha māyā* and Śiva (*jñāna*), Vindu the second *tattva* which evolves out of *śuddha māyā* and Śakti (*krīyā*). Nāda and Vindu are two of the nine manifestations of Śiva.

Aṅkāḷamman kuṟavañci

from: *Pūcārip pāṭṭu*, p. 52

In the beginning of the *kirētāyukam*, Śakti, Umā 1
Ammaṉ, Śakti, the beautiful Umā,
the Mother, became Indrāṇī who picks flowers.

In the middle of the *tirētāyukam*, Umā had come 2
Ammaṉ as Umā had come
into the world as the fruit of *tavam* and concealed the sun.

Pleading her cause, in the *tuvāparayukam*, Umā 3
Ammaṉ, in this yuga, Umā as Draupadī
won a victory over Duryodhana.

In the *kaliyukam*, as light, Umā came 4
Ammaṉ as Umā came
and in Malaiyaṉūr became the shining Aṅkāḷi.

Brahmā who did not respect mighty Durvāsas, 5
did not respect him there,
was cursed by him to lose one of his heads by Śiva.

In order to remove this curse, Brahmā came to Kailāsa 6
then, he came to Kailāsa.
Ampikai, thinking he was Śiva, prostrated at his feet and
worshipped him.

When Brahmā[1] looked at Pārvatī, he said: 'I am not Śiva.' 7
At once he said: 'I am not Śiva,'
and fell at her feet and worshipped[2] her.

After Brahmā had left Umā, Pārvatī appealed to Śiva 8
who had come, and she told him what had happened.

Aṅkāḷamman kuṟavañci (cont'd.)

'If both of you have five faces,
Lord, if it is so, on earth - 9
on earth, people will not recognize you as Īcaṉ,'[3] she said.

Śiva mounted Nandin and advanced towards Brahmā
then, he advanced towards Brahmā, 10
facing him, Ayaṉ[4] pinched off one of Brahmā's heads.

The madness of brahminicide then came over Śiva,
when it came over Śiva, 11
he danced, carrying the skull, and said: 'I am a beggar.'[5]

When the Ādiśakti saw the dancing Ādiśiva,
when Ādiśakti saw this, 12
she appealed to her brother who is the 'original source'.[6]

Māyaṉ who measured the earth,[7] looking at the face of his
sister, said: 'When Dakṣinamūrti comes holding the skull... 13

... pretend to put some rice[8] into the skull-bowl,
there, do like this, 14
and the instant you let the rice fall onto the ground,
the head will go down.'

Heeding Māyaṉ's advice, when Śiva came dancing,
then, when Śiva came dancing, 15
Mātaṅki[9] let the rice fall on the earth.[10]

At the same instant, the head went down and was held in her
left hand, 16
it was held in Ammaṉ's left hand -
that Brahma[11] left Śiva and caught hold of the hand of Ammaṉ.

The woman of one syllable,[12] Pārvatī, became one with Brahmā, 17
Ammaṉ became one with Brahmā,
alone she was dancing in many cremation grounds.

Aṅkāḷamman kuṟavañci (cont'd.)

Feathers of many birds were the jacket of her body of intelligence, 18
this jacket -
she wore it with pleasure to live in Malaiyaṉūr.

(Known) as Aṅkamuttu, Taṅkamuttu, Eṅkummutta,[13] 19
Ammaṉ as Eṅkummuttu,
she plundered (the cremation ground) at midnight.

In Māci, on *amāvācai* night, while the people were worshipping 20
there, while the people were worshipping,
she stood in the world,[14] dancing in a frenzy with Māyāṉṭi.

She is praised as the goddess who manifests on earth,[15] 21
she is praised as the goddess who is here.
She will say: 'Here I am, Pūṅkāvaṉattāy' and will grant the boons which are asked of her.

In the country which is ruled by her grace, 22
Sir, in the country which is thus ruled,
the press of Cūḷai and Maturai will earn fame.

Footnotes to *Aṅkāḷamman kuṟavañci*

[1] *kañcaṉ* (*kam* - *ja*)- 'water-born', 'lotus-born'.

[2] lit. 'did *namaskāram*'

[3] Śiva

[4] Śiva

[5] *piccāṉṭēki* - an expression used by beggars when they ask for alms.

[6] *ātimūla annaṉ*

[7] Reference to Viṣṇu as Trivikrama

[8] *aṉṉam* - 'rice' or any type of alms

[9] Mātaṅgī, a name of the goddess

[10] lit. 'the earth embraced the rice'

[11] i.e., the skull of Brahmā

[12] the syllable 'Ōm'

[13] Aṅkamuttu - 'whose body is adorned with pearls' - may refer to Māriyamman;
Taṅkamuttu - 'pearl of gold' or 'the pearl who stays'
Eṅkummuttu - 'the pearl who is everywhere'

[14] *puvi* - *pūmi* - *il* 'in the world', 'everywhere'

[15] i.e., when we think of her, she appears before us.

Ānantamē enra mettu (Tune called 'ānantamē)

from: *Pucārip pāṭṭu*, p. 14-15

You are clothed in tiger skin — Oh Bliss
Wife of the one who is adorned with water[1] — Oh Bliss
You are clothed in deer skin — "
You, wife of Māyāṇṭi
Mother of the cremation ground that is full of distress
In the middle of the cremation ground, in Tillaivanam[2]
The funerary smoke rises up
In the cremation ground beside the river[3]
The funerary smoke rises up
The cremation ground is very hot
The cremation ground is active
Mother who lifts up the cremation ground[4]
Aṅkamuttu of Malaiyanūr
Mother who lifts up the cremation ground
Wife of Cuntarecar[5]
Your husband, Mother, is Māyāṇṭi
Your beautiful son is Pāvāṭai
Pāvāṭai is on your lap
And Vēlmurukan is in your arm
Together are mother and son
Fair one through *tavam*, come, Mother!
Among 300 lions
She comes riding on the first lion
Among 500 lions
She comes riding on the beautiful lion
Mounting the ferocious lion
Ōṅkāri comes
Mounted on the immeasurable lion
Great Kāli is coming
She for whom the lion is a good chariot
Come, Mother, with magnificence
Cuckoo of the Tillai grove[2]

Ānantamē enra mettu (cont'd.)

Turn your face towards me, Mother
Cuckoo of the Katampa grove[6]
Come, Mother, jewel of the eye[7]
After you leave the sanctum of the temple
Come and sit as our guru[8]
Māri, leave the sanctum
Come, Mother, and sit down.

[1] Siva who wears Gangā on his head
[2] Citamparam
[3] River which flows in the forest or wilderness
[4] Meaning unclear
[5] Siva
[6] Maturai
[7] 'Apple of the eye'
[8] *kuruparan* - the deity in human form, appearing for the instruction of a devoted person.

Aṅkāḷa paramēsvariyiṉ viruttam[1]

from: *Pūcārip pāṭṭu*, p. 13

Pearl supreme, you became the daughter of Himavat, the mountain king,
renowned for his *tavam*
Pearl, you were born to scatter the sacrifice of Takkaṉ[2]
who opposed Paramaṉ[3]
Pearl, you carried the head of Pakavaṉ[4]
who was cursed by the devotee sage Tūruvācaṉ[5]
Pearl, adorned with feathers of various birds,
your dance is indescribable
Pearl, willingly you manifested in your body of intelligence
and danced in many cremation grounds
Pearl, you placed at your side Vaṉṉiya Pāvaṭai[6]
who guards the sacrificial altar
Pearl, snake of five colors near the lake of Malaiyaṉūr
you are worshipped by many people
Pearl, established also in the beautiful towns Rāyapuri and Cūḷai[7]
you are the ever dancing Aṅkamuttu, Aṅkamuttu

[1] *viruttam* is a kind of verse
[2] Daksa
[3] Siva
[4] Brahmā
[5] Durvāsas
[6] belonging to the Vaṉṉiya *kula*
[7] Cūḷai is in Madras, Rāyapuri may be Royapuram, also in Madras

Irattai aticīr (Song of two beats)

from: *Pūcārip pāttu*, p. 15

First light, Pārvatī of the Vedas — Aṅkālavalli[1]
of endless dance and full of good qualities — Lady of Malaiyanūr
primordial, and first light — Aṅkālavalli
macrocosm and microcosm — Lady of Malaiyanūr
with bones[2] as ornament and in the hand the *kapālam* — "
deity, adorned with a snake-necklace
deity, embodiment of intelligence
deity, who dances with Śiva,
who dances with the skull of Brahmā in the hand,
dances with the mendicant bag on her shoulders,
dances with the skull of a Brahmin in the hand.
The spirits, who see her, scream and dance,
the demons, Rākṣasas and Muṉis dance.
There, in the flowergarden you dance.
You have mounted the back of the beautiful lion.
Aṅkamutta, absorbed in your dance -
you seek the cremation ground which is without activity.
You are Vētanti (end of the Vedas), absorbed in the dance -
You are adorned with the bones of the dead,
and you are worshipped (with *pūcai*) on this great earth.

[1] *valli* - 'creeper' - often used as a comparison for women
[2] *akku* -'bone' or 'Rudrākṣa bead'.

A P P E N D I X

Malaiyaṉūr Aṅkāḷamman patikam.

from: *Muppatu cillaraik kaṭṭaṭam.*
Ār. Ji. Pati Kampeṉi, Ceṉṉai - 1

1. Cīrvaḷarum Malaiyaṉūrvantu aimpattāṟu
tēcameṅkum niṟaintāy
tiraḷāṉa celvamum maintarum vijayamum
cērntavaṭi yārkaḷippāy
tarumaturai yativīri raṇavīrapatraṉum (yāti...)
catirāṉa iruḷappaṉum
cakalavijaya mumperṟa pāvāṭairāyaṉum
taṉatupari vāramuṭaṉē
arumaivaḷar pūtakaṇa nātarpuṭai cūḻavē
aṉpāyk koluviruppāy
āyicun tarivimali ampikai yalaṅkāri
aṅkaiyaṇi yuṅkapāli
porutumaṭiyārkaḷtaṉ piṇiparantōṭiṭa
vipūtiyaru ḷuṅkāḷiyē (ṭāṅkāḷiyē)
pūṅkāvi nīḻaluṟai ōṅkāra cattiyē
pūṅkāvaṉat tāyiyē

2. pātac cilampu cataṅkaiyoṭu vaṇṭayam (veṇṭayam)
pāṭakattoṉiyiṉaḻakum
paṭṭāṭaiyaṇiyiṭaiyil oṭṭiyāṇamaraiyiṉiṟ
paḷapaḷap piṉṉaḻakum
cittāṅkukaḷapakastūri cavvātucantaṉam
cērmulaik kacciṉaḻakum
ceṅkaiyiṟ kaṭakamum navaratṉa maṇivayiramum
cūṭṭūmati nerṟiyi ṉaḻakum
mētiṉiyai vilaikoṇṭakaṇṭacara maṅkiliyam
mēvumut taṇiyiṉaḻakum
mirutuvaca ṉamumkonta ḷakkātiṉoṭukōppu
mikapaṅka yattiṉaḻakum
pōtukoṇṭu paṇiyumaṭiyārkaḷ muṉvantaruḷ (potukoṇṭu)
purintaruḷum aṅkāḷiyē
pūṅkāvi nīḻaluṟai ōṅkāra cattiyē
pūṅkāvaṉat tāyiyē

3. vāminī kāminī mālcivaṉu mayaṉunī
makimaiperu kāmāṭcinī
maṅkaiciva kāminī māyavaṉ raṅkainī
maṉṉumaru vaṅkiveḷinī
kōmaḷa svarūpinī iravunī pakalunī
kurunamaci vāyamumnī
kūttāṭumīcaṉoṭu kūttāṭuṅkāḷinī
kulavupara civamum nīyē
ōmantra rūpicaṅ kāricaṅkāriyē (caṅkārirīṅkāriyē)
orukaiyiṟ kapālamum
orukaiyiṟ cūlamum orukaiyiṟpampaiyuṅ
koṇṭuvan tennāḷumē (vantennāḷumē)
pūmitaṉi laṭiyārkaḷ viṉaitīrttu vāḻvutaru
puṇṇiyap peruñcelviyē
pūṅkāvi ... (etc.)

4. mālayaṉu mīcaṉum muppattu mukkōṭi
tāṉavarum māmuṉivarum (vāṉavarum)
varutikkuppālarum vacukkaḷumvayiravarum
vāḻpañca pāṇṭavarkaḷum
mēlāṉacātaṉum kaurimukakaṇṇium (...mukkaṇṇiyum)
vēḻamukavāk kiḻaiyaṉum (...mukavarkkiḻaiyaṉum)
melliyarkaḷ cattamēkaṅkaḷum mātarkaḷum (melliyarkaḷ cattamātar-kaḷum)
vēṇṭupukaḻ mārimuttum
kōlākalattuṭaṉ untaṉiṭa koluvataṉil
koṇṭāṭi vantuniṟpāy
kulaviya avarkkelām perumaiyāy uṉ makimai
kūṟutaṟ keḷitākumō
pūlōkam kaliyukam taṉṉilē yillāta
putumaiyiṉi vēṟumuṇṭō
pūṅkāvi ...

5. attarumpukaḷkiṉṟa tēviyuviṉcannitiyil (tēviyuṉcaṉṉitiyil)
ārār vantupaṇivār (ārāṟu vantu...)
apirāṇi ammaiyarkaḷ ātittaṉampuliyō (ayirāṇirampaiyarkaḷ ... puviyō)
taṅkiyema ṉirutivaruṇaṉ
muttuk karuppaṇṇaṉ kupēraṇivarṉikaḷ (kupēraṇivarkaḷ)
muppattumukkōṭi tēvarum
muṉṟanta vāṉmaṇam niṉaittavaramaruḷkiṉṟa
mutalviyuṉ ceyalvarātām
uṟṟatuṇai nīyeṉakkallāmalvēṟillai
nāṉorupilḷai tāṉallavō
uṉcittameṉpākyam nampiṉēnampiṉē (...pākkiyam)
ṉuṉmaṉa miṟaṅkiyētāṉ (mitaṅki...)
puttiyil lātatā laṭiyēṉai yāḷuvatu (puttiyillāta nāyaṭiyēṉai)
puṉṉiya muṉakkēvarum
pūṅkāvi ...

6. mukamāyi raṅkai yiraṇṭāyirattoṭu
muṉaikoṇṭa paṭaitāṅkiyē
mūvulaku koṇṭāṭum raṇavīrapattiraṇu
morupaṭai yiruḷappaṉum
cekamelāṅkoṇṭāṭum pāvāṭairāyaṉum
cellikkāṭ ṭēriyumaiyum
cīrāṉa vuntaṉiṭa cēṉaipari vāramum
ciṟappāka vēcūḷanī
akamakiḻum entaṉamaṉai taṉṉilvantē nī
yamaintē yirukkaviṉaika
ḷakalā tirukkumō muṉjeṉmantaṉṉilē
yāṉceyta kuṟaiyētammā
pukaḻparavu mukacavuntra pūraṇavalaṅkāri
pūṅkāvi yaṇipūṣaṇi
pūṅkāvi ...

7. vāṭiṉoṭumoṭupillicūṉiyam ēvaloṭu (vāṭiṉomeṭupilli...)
vaipputalai yeriyavukuṭṭam
varukuṉmampīṉicam kuṭaiccal veppirumaloṭu (...pīṉicai ...irumpal-oṭu)
vañcaṉaicey pittakācam
tītupuṟkirakāti tōṣaṅkaḷ muṉceyta
tīviṉaika ḷitukaḷellām
tēviyuṉpērcolla cūriyaṉ kaṇṭapaṉi
ceṅkaipō lākumammā (ceykai...)
mātavaṉ cakōtari vallāḷaṉaikkoṉṟa
vallavi cūlātari
mātēvi cuṭalaitaṉil naṭamāṭumut taṇṭi
varāki mantrarūpi
pūtanā yakicakala vētanā yakiparavu
pōrrumaṅ kāḷarūpi
pūṅkāvi ...

8. ellaip picācukaḷ kollai picācukaḷ
yiḷakamu vaṭivil vīraṉ (mūvaṭiyil)
eṭiruñ caṭāmuṉikaḷ pirammarākṣatikaḷum
iṭumpucey kuṭṭiccātti
pullaṟivu mōkiṉi ratcāmuṇṭiyoṭu (rattacātamuṇṭi...)
pūtavētāḷa mellām
vipūtikoṇṭeṟiyavē alaṟavēvōṭiṭum (alaṟiyēvōṭiṭum)
uṉputumai evarumpukaḷvār
kallātanāyiṉēṉ ceytapiḻai poṟuttu
kaṭāksaṇya maruḷkāraṇi
cakalapari pūraṇi nāraṇi yāraṇi
kāmiyapi rāmivāmi
pollāta lōpartampakkañ ceṉṟavarkaḷaip
pōṟṟāmal vāḻvutaruvāy
pūṅkāvi ...

9. tantiramariyē nuraicey mantiramariyēnmiku
 tavaṅkaḷotu tēkamariyēn
tanmalaretuttatiyil arccikkavarikilēn
 campratā yaṅkaḷariyēn
cintaiyuruputtiyāy pōrravariyēnunatu (cintaiyuru...)
 centamilai yōtavariyēn
cittamtaittāḷuvatu untanukkē kaṭan (cittamvaittāḷuvatu)
 ceppiyān enceykuvēn
cantiracē karikaurijaṭātari mukkaṇṇi
 cāmpavi varākinīli
tāyimakammāyi caturvēti kirupākari
 cāmuṇṭi kākapāli (or: karakapāli) (makapāli)
puttimakiṭanvāḷa muttitāntavañceyta
 pūmpāta kamalinimali
pūṅkāvi ...

10. ulakinilpukaḷākamam munivōrka ḷarikinra
 varupattu nālukalaiyu
mānatonnūrrāru tattuvampatinen
 purāṇamu māraṇaṅkaḷum
nalamulḷa nānmaraipporuḷ ñāṇamāy ninra
 nāyaki yuncevikku
nāncolum puncolil pilaiporuttunatumanam (puncolin)
 nayamā yukantaruḷuvāy
kamalcura nīlikirupāli karampaṇipacuntoḷir (kamalacura ...kirupācu karam...)
 tanimatura mirutupāṇi (kanimatura)
kāciniyōr koṇṭāṭu mammaicivakāmiyē
 karuṇaiyuḷa vōṅkāḷiyē (uḷa vāṅkāḷiyē)
pulavarpaṇi pātāra vintatti nātatti (nātacita)
 pōtānta yaṅkāḷiyē
pūṅkāvi ...

Aṅkāḷammaṉ kuṟavañci

from: Pūcārip pāṭṭu (p. 52)

1. Ātikirētāyukam taṉṉilē cattiyantavumaiyāḷ
ammaṉ cattiyantavumaiyāḷ
āttāḷ puspam paṟikkumanta intirāṇiyāṉāl

2. pātiyilē tirētāyukam taṉṉil vantu vumaiyāḷ
ammaṉ taṉṉil vantu vumaiyāḷ
pāril talāṅkaṇiyāy vantu cūriyaṉai maṟaittāḷ

3. vātiyāy tuvāparāyukam taṉṉilē vumaiyāḷ
ammaṉ yukam taṉṉilē vumaiyāḷ
vātāṭi turaupatiyāy turiyaṉaiyum veṉṟāl

4. cōtiyām kaliyukam taṉṉil vantu vumaiyāḷ
ammaṉ taṉṉil vantu vumaiyāḷ
cōpitamāy malaiyaṉūril aṅkāḷiyāṉāl

5. pirmmaṉ vaṇtūr vācarai matiyātatāḷē
aṅku matiyātatāḷē
piñcakaṉāṉ ōr ciram tāṉ pōkaveṇa cepittār

6. accāpam tīra pirmmaṉ kayilaṅkiri varuka
appō kayilaṅkiri varuka
araṇeṉṟu ampikaiyum aṭipaṇintu toḻutāḷ

7. pārvatiyai kañcaṉ kaṇṭu civaṉalla nāṉeṉavē
appō civaṉalla nāṉeṉavē
pātamatil viḻuntu namaskāram ceytu naṭantāṉ

8. kañcaṉ ceṉṟa piṉpa vumaipārvatiyumaṅkē
karttar vara muṟaiyamiṭṭu kāraṇattai vuraittāḷ

Aṅkāḷamman kuṟavañci (cont.)

9. iruvarkaḷum aintu mukamākiruntāṉ vulakil
cuvāmi ākiruntāṉ vulakil
ivvulakil yīcaṉeṉa aṟiyārkaḷ eṉṟāḷ

10. nantiyiṉ mēlvūrntucivaṉ pirmmaṉmuṉṉēvantu
appō pirmmaṉ muṉṉē vantu
munti ayaṉ ōr cirattai kiḷḷiṉārappōtu

11. pirmmaṉuṭa pirmmapittu piñcaṉukkāki
appō piñcaṉukkāki
piccāntēki yeṉṟu maṇṭaiyēnti āṭiṉārē

12. āti civaṉ āṭiṭavē āticatti kaṇṭu
appō āticattikaṇṭu
ātimūla aṇṇaṉiṭam muṟaiyumiṭṭāḷ aṅku

13. taraṇi aḷanta māyaṉ taṅkai mukam pārttu
taṭkṣaṇāmūrtti maṇṭaiyēnti varumnēram

14. aṉṉamatai maṇṭaivōṭṭil pōṭuvatu pōḷa
aṅku pōṭuvatupōḷa
aṭkṣaṇam aṉṉam taraiyilviṭaciram iṟaṅkumeṉṟār

15. māyaṉmoḻi tavaṟāmal civaṉ āṭivaruka
appō civaṉ āṭivaruka
mātaṅki aṉṉamatai pūmi taḻuvaviṭṭāḷ

16. aṭkṣaṇamē ciram iṟaṅka iṭatu kaiyil tāṅka
ammaṉ iṭatu kaiyil tāṅka
anta pirmmam civaṉai viṭṭu ammai karamperṟa

17. ēkāṭkṣari pārvatiyāḷ ēka pirmmamāki
ammai ēka pirmmamāki
ēkapōkamāka pala cuṭalaiyāṭi iruntāḷ

Āṅkāḷamman kuṟavañci (cont.)

18. palapaṭkṣi iṟakukaḷai cittāṅka kañcuḷiyāy
amman cittāṅka kañcuḷiyāy
paṭkṣamuṭan tān tarittu malaiyanūril vāla

19. aṅkamuttu taṅkamuttu eṅkum muttu veṉavē
amman eṅkum muttuveṉavē
arttakaṅkunnērattilēkoḷḷaiyatukoṇṭāḷ

20. māci nici amāvācai māṉiṭarkaḷ toluka
aṅku māṉiṭarkaḷ toluka
māyāṇṭikūṭa maruḷāṭi niṉṟāḷ puviyil

21. pūmitaṉil kaṇṭa teyvameṉe tutikka
iṅku teyvameṉe tutikka
pūṅkāvaṉattāy nāṉeṉa kēṭṭavaram taruvāḷ

22. cuṭkṣi aruḷāṭkṣi āṭkṣipari nāṭu
ayyā āṭkṣipuri nāṭu
cūḷai accukkūṭa maturai pērperuka kāṇpār

Text should be corrected as follows:
v. 1: ...āṉāḷ; v. 2: tavaṅkaṉiyāy or: tavamakṉiyāy; v. 3: veṉṟāḷ;
v. 4: aṅkāḷiyāṉāḷ; v. 5: pirmman avaṉ... matiyātatālē;
v. 9: iruntāl; v. 22: ...puri.

Ānantamē enra meṭṭu

from: *Pūcārip pāṭṭu* (p. 14-15)

Pilittōl tarittavaḷē
puṉalaṇintōṉ tēviyammāḷ
māṉtōl tarittavaḷē
māyāṇṭi pattiṉiyē
naṭalai cuṭalaiyammāḷ
naṭuccuṭalai tillaivaṉam
kāṭupukai kiḻampum
kāṇāṟu niṉṟeriyum
cuṭalai pukai kiḻampum
vēkutu cuṭalaikkarai
viḻaiyutu macāṉakkarai
macāṉakkarai tūkkiyammāḷ
malaiyaṉūr aṅkamuttu
cuṭalaikarai tūkkiyammāḷ
cuntarēcar pattiṉiyē
āḷaṉammā māyāṇṭi
aḻaku piḷḷai pāvāṭai
maṭimīṭil pāvāṭai
tōlmīṭil vēlmurukar
tāyārum piḷḷaiyumāy
tavamaḻaki vāṅkaḷammā
muṉṉūṟu ciṅkattilē
muṉciṅkam ēṟivārāṉ
ainnūṟu ciṅkattilē
aḻakuciṅkam ēṟivārāṉ
āṅkāra ciṅkamēṟi
ōṅkāri vārāḷē
maṭṭaṭaṅkā ciṅkamēṟi
māṅkāḷi vārāḷē
ciṅka nalla ratattāḷē
ciṟapputaṉē vāṅkaḷammā
tillaivaṉakkuyilē
tirumpammāḷ inta mukam

Ānantamē
ānantamē
etc.

Āṉantamē eṉṟa meṭṭu (cont.)

kaṭampavaṉakkuyilē
kaṉmaṇiyē vāṅkaḷammā
kōvilaṟaiyai vīṭṭu
kuruparyāḷ vantamara
māriyaraiyai viṭṭu
mātāvē vantamarum

Text should be corrected as follows:
line 1: pulittōl; line 8: kāṉāṟu; line 19: tōḷ; lines 23, 25: ...vārāḷ;
line 36: viṭṭu; line 38: ...aṟai.

Aṅkāḷa paramēsvariyiṉ viruttam

from: *Pūcārip pāṭṭu* (p. 13)

Parvata tavarāja imayavāṉ makaḷāki
parāpara māṉamuttu
paramaṉai etirtiṭṭa takkaṉuṭayākattiṉ
paṟantiṭavatitta muttu
paktaṉām tūrvāca muṉicāpa pirmmaṉāl
pakavaṉ ciramēntum muttu
palavita paṭkṣiyuṭa iṟakutaṉai pūṇṭumē
pakaroṇā naṭaṉa muttu
paṭkṣamāy cittāṅka vuṭaiyatai tarittumē
pala cuṭalai yāṭum muttu
palipīṭam kārttiṭum vaṉṉiya pāvāṭaiyai
pakkattil vaitta muttu
palarkaḷum tutittiṭa malaiyaṉūr ēriyil
pañcavarṇa nāka muttu
paṉpāṉa rāyapuri cūḷaimānakarilum
patintāṭum aṅkamuttē aṅkamuttē

Text should be corrected as follows:
line 11: kāttiṭum; line 16: paṇpāṉa.

Iraṭṭai aṭicīr

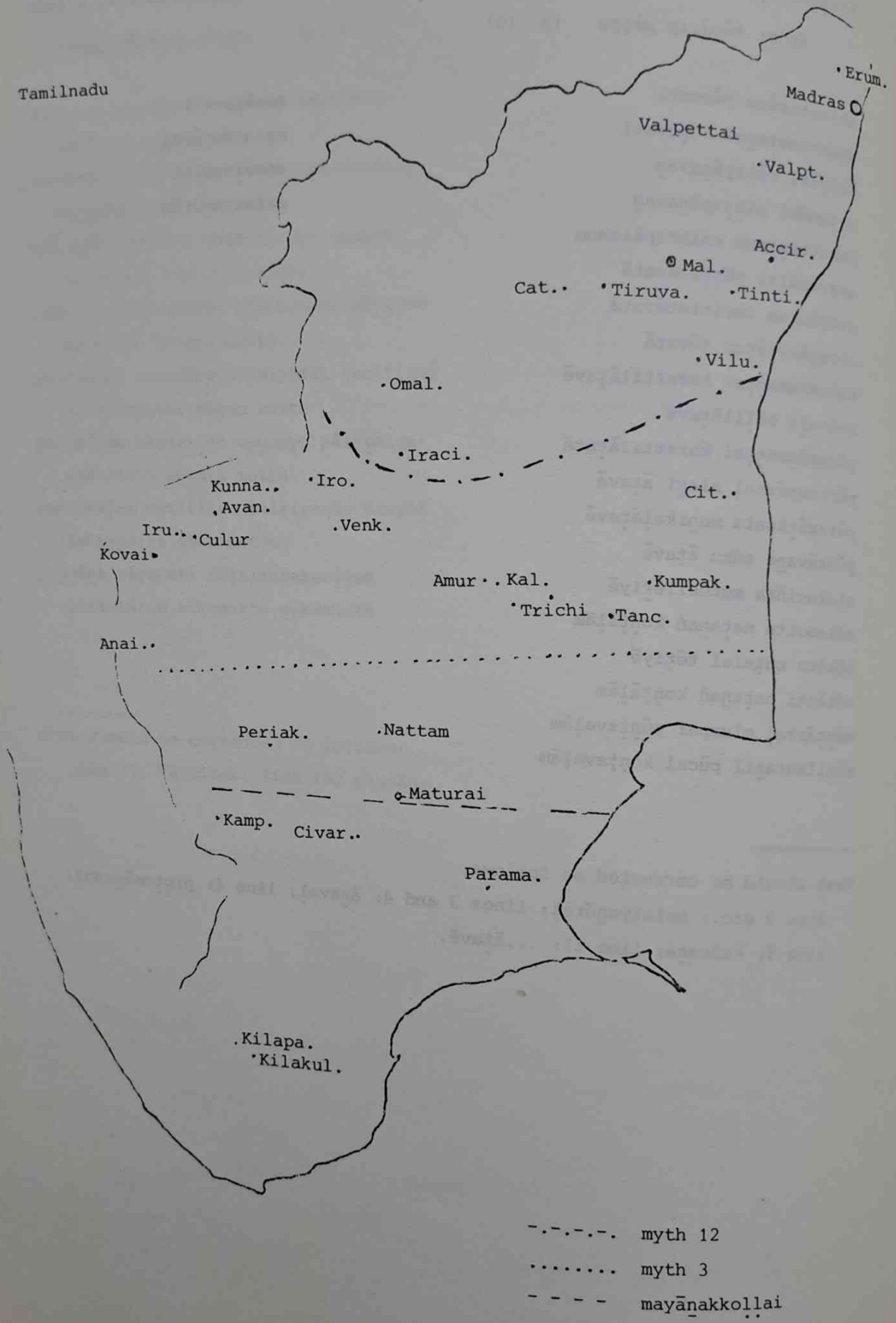
from: Pūcārip pāṭṭu (p. 15)

Āticōtivēta pārvati
aṉantanaṭaṉam kuṇavati
ātiyāki cōtiyāṉavaṉ
aṇṭamāki piṇṭapāṉavaṉ
akkuttaṇiyum kaikkapālamum
aravamālai pūṇṭatēvatā
cittāṅkam tarittatēvatā
civaṉārōṭāṭum tēvatā
kañcaṇamaṇṭai karattilāṭavē
kañculi tōḷilāṭavē
pārppāṉmaṇṭai karattilāṭatē
pārttapēykaḷ alaṟi āṭavē
pūtarāṭkṣata muṉikaḷāṭavē
pūṅkāvaṉa aṅku āṭavē
aḷakuciṅka mutukilēṟiyē
aṅkamuttu naṭaṉaṅ koṇṭāḷām
vēkāta cuṭalai tēṭiyē
vētānti naṭaṉaṅ koṇṭāḷām
māṇṭārkaḷ elumpai pūṇṭavaḷām
māṉilantaṉil pūcai koṇṭavaḷām

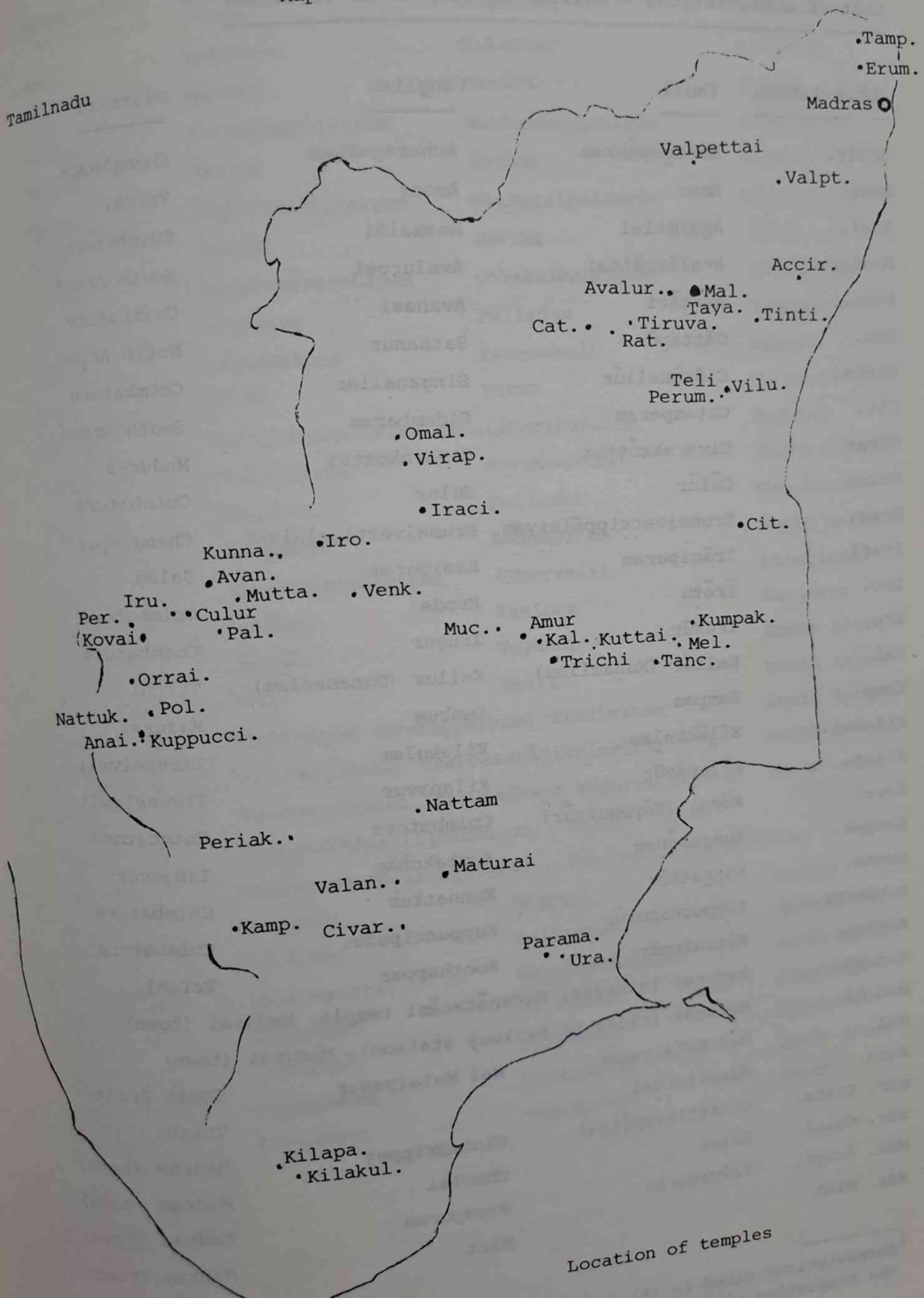
Aṅkāḷavalli
malaiyaṉūraṉ
aṅkāḷavalli
malaiyaṉūrāṉ
etc.

Text should be corrected as follows:
line 2 etc.: malaiyaṉūrāḷ; lines 3 and 4: āṉavaḷ; line 4: piṇṭamāṉavaḷ;
line 9: kañcaṉa; line 11: ...āṭavē.

MAP I


Tamilnadu
Erum.
Madras
Valpettai
Valpt.
Accir.
Mal.
Cat.
Tiruva.
Tinti.
Vilu.
Omal.
Iraci.
Kunna..
Iro.
Avan.
Cit.
Iru..
Culur
Venk.
Kovai
Amur
Kal.
Kumpak.
Trichi
Tanc.
Anai..
Periak.
Nattam
Maturai
Kamp.
Civar..
Parama.
Kilapa.
Kilakul.
myth 12
myth 3
mayāṉakkollai

Map II


Tamilnadu
Tamp.
Erum.
Madras
Valpettai
Valpt.
Accir.
Avalur.
Mal.
Taya.
Tinti.
Cat.
Tiruva.
Rat.
Teli
Perum.
Vilu.
Omal.
Virap.
Iraci.
Cit.
Iro.
Kunna.
Avan.
Iru.
Mutta.
Venk.
Per.
Culur
Kovai
Pal.
Muc.
Amur
Kal.
Kuttai.
Kumpak.
Mel.
Trichi
Tanc.
Orrai.
Nattuk.
Pol.
Anai.
Kuppucci.
Nattam
Periak.
Maturai
Valan.
Kamp.
Civar.
Parama.
Ura.
Kilapa.
Kilakul.
Location of temples

List of abbreviations - Aṅkāḷamman temples in Tamilnadu[1]

Abbreviation	Tamil	English	District
Accir.	Accirupākkam	Acharapakkam	Chengleput
Amur	Āmūr	Amoor	Trichi
Anai.	Āṉaimalai	Anamalai	Coimbatore
Avalur.	Avalūrpēṭṭai	Avalurpet	South Arcot
Avan.	Avaṉāci	Avanasi	Coimbatore
Cat.	Cāttaṉūr	Sathanur	North Arcot
Cinka.	Ciṅkāṉallūr	Singanallur	Coimbatore
Cit.	Citamparam	Cidambaram	South Arcot
Civar.	Civarakkōṭṭai	Sivarakottai	Madurai
Culur	Cūlūr	Sulur	Coimbatore
Erum.	Erumaivettippālaiyam	Erumaivettipalaiyam	Chengleput
Iraci.	Irācipuram	Rasipuram	Salem
Iro.	Īrōṭu	Erode	Coimbatore
Iru.	Irukūr	Irugur	Coimbatore
Kal.	Kallūr (Kuṇacīlam)	Kallur (Gunaseelam)	Trichi
Kamp.	Kampam	Cumbum	Madurai
Kilakul.	Kīḻākkuḷam	Kilakulam	Tirunelveli
Kilapa.	Kīḻapāvūr	Kilapavur	Tirunelveli
Kovai	Kōvai (Kōyamuttūr)	Coimbatore	Coimbatore
Kumpak.	Kumpakōṇam	Kumbakonam	Tanjavur
Kunna.	Kuṉṉattūr	Kunnattur	Coimbatore
Kuppucci.	Kuppucciputūr	Kuppuccipudur	Coimbatore
Kuttai.	Kūttaippār	Koothappar	Trichi
Mad.Gu.	Maturai Talaiyāri Kurunātacāmi temple, Madurai (town)		
Mad.Rl.	Maturai (close to Railway station), Madurai (town)		
Mal.	Mēl Malaiyaṉūr	Mel Malaiyanur	South Arcot
Mana.	Maṇattattai		Trichi
Mdr. Cinta.	Cintātirippēṭṭai	Cintadrippet	Madras (town)
Mdr. Culai	Cūḷai	Choolai	Madras (town)
Mdr. Iraya.	Irāyapuram	Royapuram	Madras (town)
Mdr. Mint		Mint	Madras (town)

[1] Abbreviations cited in the text refer to statements made by the *pūcāri* of the respective Aṅkāḷamman temples.

Abbreviation	Tamil	English	District
Mel.	Melattūr	Milattur	Tanjavur
Muc.	Muciri	Musiri	Trichi
Mutta.	Muttanampālaiyam	Muttanampalaiyam	Coimbatore
Nattam	Nattam	Natham	Madurai
Nattuk.	Nāṭṭukkalpālaiyam	Nattukalpalaiyam	Coimbatore
Omal.	Ōmalūr	Omalur	Salem
Orrai.	Orraikkālmantapam	Othakalmandapam	Coimbatore
Pal.	Pallatam	Palladam	Coimbatore
Parama.	Paramakkuti	Paramakudi	Ramnad
Per.	Pērūr	Perur	Coimbatore
Periak.	Periyakulam (vaṭa karai)	Periyakulam	Madurai
Perum.	Perumpākkam	Perumbakkam	South Arcot
Pol.	Pollācci	Pollachi	Coimbatore
Rat.	Rātāpuram	Radhapuram	North Arcot
Tamp.	Tamparettipālaiyam	(Thervali)	Chengleput
Tanc.	Tañcāvūr	Tanjore	Tanjavur
Taya.	Tāyanūr	Tayanur	South Arcot
Teli	Teli	Theli	South Arcot
Tinti.	Tiṇṭivaṉam (Avarappākkam)	Tindivanam	South Arcot
Tiruva.	Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Parvatarājakulavīti)		North Arcot
Tiruva. (2)	Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Tirumaṅkaṉa Kōpuram Street)		North Arcot
Tri-P.	Tirucciṟāppalli (Pūkkulam), Trichi (town)		
Tri-U.	Tirucciṟāppalli (Uṟaiyūr) - Woriyur, Trichi (town)		
Ura.	Urappuli	Urapuli	Ramnad
Valan.	Vālāntūr	Velanthur	Madurai
Valpettai	Vālājāpeṭṭai	Walajapet(tai)	North Arcot
Valpt.	Vālācāpāt	Walajabad	Chengleput
Venk.	Veṅkampūr	Vengambur	Coimbatore
Vilu.	Viluppuram	Villupuram	South Arcot
Virap.	Vīrapāṇṭi	Veerapandi	Salem

LIST OF INFORMANTS

TEMPLE	NAME OF INFORMANT
Accirupākkam	Ellappa Tampirar
Āmūr	K. Marutupantaram
Āṉaimalai	S. Cauntararajan (1) Velucamikavuntar (2)
Avalūrpēṭṭai	Cankarainattar Cenarttanan (Arccakar)
Avaṉāci	A. Arumukam (Pantaram)
Cāttaṉūr	---
Citamparam	V. Srinivasan
Civarakkōṭṭai	Mu. Pancaccaram (Aciriyar) Muttukrishnatevar
Cūlūr	S.V. Natarajan
Erumaiveṭṭippāḷaiyam	Kumarapantaram
Irācipuram	Arumukam (pūcāri) Ankumuttu
Irōṭu	Palanicamikavuntar
Irukūr	---
Kallūr	V. Kovintacamicettiyar
Kampam	Cuppu (pūcāri) S. Kurucami
Kīḻākkuḷam	S. Paramacivatevar
Kīḻapāvūr	Cankaranarayana (Kurukkaḷ) (1) P.S. Palani (Mutaliyār) (2)
Kōvai	V. Peccimuttu Ponnucami
Kumpakōṇam	S.V. Muttu
Kuṉṉattūr	Cuntaram (Paṇṭāram) A. Rajukopal (Trustee) K.S. Vellingiri " M. Civacami "
Kuppucciputūr	C. Viracamitevar
Kūttaippār	K.N. Ponnucami (Paṇṭāram) (1) V.P.M. Marutumuttu (2)
Maturai (Mad.Gu.)	R. Kurunatapillai
Maturai (Mad.Rl.)	Kovintarajan Mrs. Makamariyamman
Mēl Malaiyaṉūr	U. Punkavanam (1) Vellaikannan (pampai) (2)

TEMPLE	NAME OF INFORMANT
Madras (Mdr.Cinta.)	V.N. Canmukam Cuntaram (1) Vitvan M. Macilamani (2)
Madras (Mdr.Culai)	B. Kecavan (Mutaliyār)
Madras (Mdr.Iraya.)	M. Cantiracekaran (1) V.S. Vasisvara (Kurukkaḷ) (2)
Madras (Mint)	Mrs. Muniyamman
Melaṭṭūr	Muttaiya
Muciri	K. Marutai (Mutaliyār)
Muttaṇampāḷaiyam	S.P. Muttucami (Mutaliyār)
Nattam	N. Muttukaruppancettiyar
Nāṭṭukkalpāḷaiyam	Pettancettiyar Palaniyappa (pampai)
Ōmalūr	Manikkiyam (1) Raju (pampai) (2)
Orraikkālmaṇṭapam	Nakappan (pampai) (1) A. Velucamikavuntar (village munsif) (2)
Pallaṭam	Macanipucari Kattan (1) A. Catacivanpillai (2)
Paramakkuṭi	Canmukam
Pērūr	P.M. Cuppiramaniyam
Periyakuḷam	Mrs. Ankalamman
Perumpākkam	Rajakopalan Mannankattikavuntar Arumukam
Poḷḷācci	A.S. Rao
Rātāpuram	Tankavel (1) Cuppiramaniyam S. Srinivasa
Tamparetṭipāḷaiyam	Renkanatan Retti
Tañcāvūr	T.A. Cuppiramaniyam
Tāyaṉūr	Kuppucamitampiran
Teḷi	Varatarajalunayutu Cuntaramurtinayutu
Tiṇṭivaṉam	T.M. Tankavelnattar (1) Macilamanikavuntar (2)
Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Parvatarājakulavīti)	Cittanattar Kancamalainattar Cuppiramaniyam (Annamalai Press)
Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (2)	Camikannattar (pampai)

TEMPLE	NAME OF INFORMANT
Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (Tri-P.)	P. Rajentiran (Pujakar)
Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (Tri-U.)	T.N. Virappancettiyar
Urappuḷi	Varivel A. Ramacami (Trustee)
Vālāntūr	Kuruvappanayakkar
Vālājāpeṭṭai	Paracuramanattar (1) Maninattar (2)
Vālācāpāt	M. Ankappanattar
Veṅkampūr	R. Ankupillai (1) A. Kopalan (pampai) (2)
Viḻuppuram	Paracuramanattar
Vīrapāṇṭi	Ankumuttucettiyar (1) M. Arumukam (Kavuntar) (2)

ANKALAMMAN-TEMPLES IN TAMILNADU ACCORDING TO CENSUS OF INDIA (1961)

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
Tiruchirapalli-district				
Musiri	Kannanore		Mahasivaratri	Pandaram (hereditary)
Musiri	Thottiam	200	Mahasivaratri	Pandaram (hered.)
* Musiri	Musiri (300)	200	Sivaratri	Mudaliar (hered.)
* Musiri	Amoor	100	Sivaratri	Pandaram (hered.)
* Musiri	Gunaseelam (Kallur)	200	Sivaratri	Chettiar (hered.)
Karur	Puliyur	---	June	---
Karur	Puravipalayam (Thumbivadi)	---	Mahasivaratri	poosari (hered.)
Karur	Thuvarankurichi (Ponnampatti)	---	Sivaratri	poosari (hered.)
Kulathur	Kathalur	---	Mahasivaratri	Pillai (hered.)
Kulathur	Mandaiyur	150	Mahasivaratri	Pandaram (hered.)
Tirumayam	Thekkattur	---	March	---
Perambalur	Valikandapuram	200	Mayanakollai (Masi)	poosari (hered.)
Lalgudi	Manachanallur	---	---	---
* Trichi	Koothappar	100	Sivaratri	Lingayat
* Trichi	Trichi (Pukkulam)	---	Mahasivaratri	Vellalar
* Trichi	Trichi (Uraiyur)	---	Mahasivaratri	Chettiar
Chingleput-district				
	Chingleput	200	---	Gurukkal of the Siva temple
* Kancheepuram	Walajabad	100	Mahasivaratri	Sempadavan
* Madurantakam	Acharapakkam	1000	Brahmothsavam (Masi)	Vanniyar
Ponneri	Obasamudram	---	May/June	---
* Ponneri	Thervali (Tamparettipal.)	---	Sept/Oct	Pandaram
* Ponneri	Erumavettipalayam	--	Feb/Mar	Pandaram

* Temples included in this study.

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
South Arcot-district				
* Gingee	Mel Malaiyanur	---	monthly & Brahmothsavam (Feb/Mar)	Sempadavan
Gingee	Kalladi Kuppam	---	Jan/Feb	---
Tindivanam	Purangarai	---	Mar	---
Tindivanam	Anumandai	170	Mar/Apr Panguni Uthiram	poosari (hered.)
* Tindivanam	Avarapakkam (Tintivanam)	200	Brahmothsavam (Masi)	Sempadavan
Tindivanam	Perumukkal	---	Mar Mayanakollai	---
* Gingee	Avalur (pet) (Muthialamman temple)	300	Sivaratri Mayanakollai	---
Villupuram	Kunnathur S.E.	---	Feb/Mar	---
Villupuram	Asur		Mar/Apr (car festival)	---
* Villupuram	Villupuram	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	Sempadavan
Villupuram	Sithalampattu	---	May	---
Villupuram	Koliyanur	300	---	Vanniyar (hered.)
* Villupuram	Theli	500	Panguni	Naidu (hered.)
* Villupuram	Perumbakkam (Venkatesapuram)	---	Apr/May	Kavuntar
Kallakurichi	Rowuthanallur	---	Mar (Amavasai day)	---
Kallakurichi	Sithalur	---	Feb/Mar	(Sempadavan)
Cidambaram	Kaliamalai (Kandakumaram)	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	---
Cidambaram	Valakollai (Odakkanallur)	200	---	Naicker (hered.)
* Cidambaram	Cidambaram	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	Vanniyar
Vriddhachalam	Ko.Pavalangudi	150	Panguni Uthiram	Vanniyar
Cuddalore	Vasantharayapalam	100	Mayanakollai (Masi)	poosari
"	Cutukkulam (H/O Katalur)	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	poosari
* Walajapet	Walajapettai	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	Sempadavan
Arkonam	Tirumalpore	70	Kanumpongal (Masi)	Pandaram

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
South Arcot-district				
Gudiatham	Talaiyatham	100	Mahasivaratri	Pandaram
Gudiatham	Murukkambattu	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	---
Gudiatham	Tirumani (Tiruvannamalai)	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	Sempadavan
Vellore	Pichanatham	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	---
Vellore	Kilmanavur	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	---
Wandiwash	Desur	---	March	---
Wandiwash	Wandiwash	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	---
Polur	Melsholankuppam	---	Mar/Apr	---
* Chengam	Sathanur	---	Feb/Mar	Sempadavan
* Chengam	Radhapuram	---	Feb/Mar	Sempadavan
Tiruvannamalai	Natham Poondi	---	Feb/Mar	---
* Tiruvannamalai	Tiruvannamalai	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	Sempadavan
Tiruvannamalai	Sanipoondi	---	March	---
Thanjavur-district				
Nagapattinam	Pudupathur	---	Utsavam Chitrai (May)	poosari
Nagapattinam	Tiruvarur	---	---	Gurukkal
Nagapattinam	Tirukkuvalai	1000	Adi	poosari
Tiruturaipundi	Koravapulam	---	May/June	---
Tiruturaipundi	Sembadavangadu	---	Thai	poosari
Mannargudi	Vellakudi (Sithanakudi)	---	Mahasivaratri	---
* Kumbakonam	Kumbakonam	---	Mahasivaratri	Vellalar
Kumbakonam	Narasingapettai	150		poosari
* Papanasam	Milattur	---	---	Muppanar
Arantangi	Manamelkudi	200	Sivaratri	Pandaram
* Tanjaver (town)	Tanjavur		Sivaratri (Masi)	Vanniyar

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
Madurai-district				
Palni	Korikadavu	---	---	---
Palni	Idayakottai	---	---	Chettiar (hered.)
Palni	Pudu Ayakudi	---	---	Pandaram (hered.)
* Periakulam	Thenkarai	500		Asari
Periakulam	Combai	130	Kartikai Deepam	poosari
* Periakulam	Cumbum	300	---	Naidu
* Melur	Natham	100	Sivaratri	Chettiar
Madurai	Madurai (Nadar's Vidya Salai Street)	150	Sivaratri	poosari
* Madurai	Madurai (Mad. Junction)	---	Mahasivaratri Citrai	Tevar
Madurai	Madurai (Therku Veli Street)	30	---	Pillai
* Madurai	Madurai (Gurunathaswamy temple)	---	Mahasivaratri	Vellala-Pillai
* Madurai	Madurai (Minaksi-College)	---	---	Vellala-Pillai
* Madurai	Vativelkarai	---	---	---
* Tirumangalam	Valanthur	100	Mahasivaratri	Naicker
Rajapalayam	Periya Corakkanpatti	---	---	---
Ramanathapuram-district				
Sivaganga	Enathi Sengottai	---	Brahmothsavam (Masi)	Pillai
* Paramakudi	Paramakudi	---	Mahasivaratri	Chettiar
* Paramakudi	Urapuli	300	Mahasivaratri	Pillaimar
	Rameswaram (Vinayakar & Angalamman t.)	300	Navaratri	Tevar
Mudukulathur	Anaiyur	100	---	Asari
Aruppukottai	Ulakudi (Gurunathaswamy & Angalamman t.)	175	Sivaratri	Pillai
Coimbatore-district				
Gopichetti-palayam	Pariyurgramam	---	---	---

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
Coimbatore-district				
Gopichettip.	Andipalayam	---	---	Mudaliar
* Erode	Kunnathur	100	---	Pandaram
* Erode	Erode	500	Mahasivaratri	Kavuntar
* Erode	Vengambur	---	Masi	Vellalar
Dharapuram	Thenvoyalpalayam (Dharapuram town)	---	---	Pillai
Dharapuram	Moolarpatti	150	Sivaratri Kundam (Jan/Feb)	Chettiar
Dharapuram	Nanjai Thariyur	100	Navaratri, Sivaratri Karthigai Deepam	Pandaram
* Palladam	Irugur	---	Mahasivaratri (Feb/Mar)	Tevar
* Palladam	Sulur	150	Mahasivaratri, Kundam	Archagar (Pandaram)
Palladam	Sokkanur	300	Karthigai Deepam	Mudaliar
* Palladam	Muthanampalayam	---	Sivaratri (Masi)	Mudaliar
Palladam	Thoravalur	---	---	Pandaram
Palladam	Chettipalayam	100	---	Pandaram
Palladam	Koilvalli	150	Sivaratri	poosari
Palladam	Naranapuram	100	---	Pandaram
Palladam	Pachapalayam (Periakuilai)	150	---	---
Palladam	Muthu Goundan (Railway Colony)	---	(Masi)	---
* Palladam	Palladam	---	Mahasivaratri	Pillai
* Avanasi	Avanasi	---	Mahasivaratri, Kundam	Pandaram
Coimbatore	Chinnathadagam	---	---	Pandaram
* Coimbatore	Coimbatore	250	Navaratri, Mahasivaratri	Pandaram-Lingayat
Coimbatore	Ikkikarai Baluvampatti	11?	Sivaratri, Kundam	Chettiar
* Coimbatore	Perur	500	Navaratri, Mahasivaratri Karthigai Deepam	Pillai
* Coimbatore	Othakalmandapam	300	Mahasivaratri, Karthigai Deepam	Chettiar

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
Coimbatore-district				
Coimbatore	Vilankurichi	---	(Masi)	---
Pollachi	Kinathukadavu	300	---	Pandaram
Pollachi	Pollachi	500	Amman-festival	---
Pollachi	Eripatti	250	Sivaratri	Chettiar
* Pollachi	Nattukalpalayam	100	Mahasivaratri	Chettiar
* Pollachi	Singanallur	200	Mahasivaratri	Pandaram
* Pollachi	Anamalai	---	Masaniamman (Jan/Feb)	Gurukkal
* Pollachi	Kuppucciputur	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	Tevar
Udumalpet	Kottamangalam	200	---	Pillai
Udumalpet	Karatholuvu	800	Sivaratri	Chettiar
Udumalpet	Kadathur	100	Sivaratri	Chettiar
Salem-district				
Dharmapuri	Dharmapuri	350	Mahasivaratri	Pillai
Dharmapuri	Adiyamankottai	---	---	Asari
* Omalur	Omalur	300	Masi Sivaratri, Karthigai	Vanniyar
Salem	Mettupatti	100	---	Kavuntar (?)
* Salem	Veerapandi	500	Mahasivaratri	Chettiar
Salem	Veppilaipatti	---	Mayanakollai (Masi)	---
* Rasipuram	Rasipuram	100	---	Kavuntar (Pataiyatci)
Attur	Attur	---	---	poojari
Attur	Kundamalai	100	---	Pandaram
Namakkal	Sirkarkondalam (Kondalam)	---	Masi	Naicker
Krishnagiri	Kavaripatnam	---	February	---
Krishnagiri	Nadungal	---	---	---
Krishnagiri	Pannandur	---	May	---
Dharmapuri	Marandahalli	---	February	---
Sankari	Koneripatti Agraharam	---	Angalamman festival	---

Taluk	village	age	festival	priest
Salem-district				
Rasipuram	Muthuruttu	---	Angalamman festival	---
Attur	Aragalur	---	Feb/March	---
Attur	Veeraganur	---	Mar/April	---
Namakkal	Sircar Natta-mangalam	---	March	---
Namakkal	Manianur	---	Feb/March	---
Namakkal	Parampathi	---	March	---
Tirunelveli-district				
* Tenkasi	Kilapavur	200	Mahasivaratri	Gurukkal
* Ambasamudram	Kilakulam	(400)	Mahasivaratri	Pillaimar
Madras-City				
* Royapuram	Adham Sahib Street	---	Brahmothsavam (Masi) Navaratri (Sep/Oct)	Gurukkal
* Chintadripet	Venkatesa Gramani Street	100	Masi Mahasiva-ratri, Adi (Jul/Aug)	Sempadavan
* Choolai	South Mada Street	---	Brahmothsavam (Masi) Navaratri	Naicker
Madras 2	Bodyguard Road	20	Masi	Naidu
Muthialpet	Sengazhuneer Pillaiyar Koil St.	100	Masi	Gurukkal

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INDEX

Ācāri: 61,64,91,93ff.,95,96,150

Acciṟupākkam: 50,72,81,90,92

acuttam, aśuddha: 39,75,78,81, 83,104,149,150,153ff.,204,233, 246

Ādi (Parā)śakti (Āticakti): 6, 19,27,30,43,45,46,58,65,68

Ādiśeṣa: 49

administration of temples: 87ff., 154,156

Aiyaṉār: 83,95

Aiyar: 64,88,96,104,253

Akampaṭiyar: 94

Akilāṇṭanāyaki: 48,217

akōra rūpam, (a)ghora rūpa: 11,37, 49,57,77,80,154,159,164,186, 220, 221,223,261ff.

Akōravīrapattira(cuvāmi): 147,189

alaku niṟuttal: 107,230,233,236, 238ff.

Alañcāttā: 52

amāvācai, amāvāsyā: 36,111,113, 117,124,142,146,211,222,275

Ampalakārar: 92

Ampaṭṭar: 92

Ampikai (Ambikā): 58,266

Āmūr: 76,88,146,162,175, 195,239,240,245,253

Āṉaimalai: 76,84,85,116ff.,121, 167,172,184,204,213,220,224, 229,235,242,248,258,259

androgyne: 47,65

Āṉi (June-July): 103

aṅkam, aṅga: 77

Āṇṭāl: 54

aṇṭapiṇṭam: 6,42,43,280

Āṇṭicci: 52

apinayam, abhinaya: 6

apiṣēkam, abhiṣeka: 91,121,157,237

Āravalli: 52

Ardhanārīśvara: 37,41,178

Aruṇācala: 18,40,101,102,189,198ff. (see also: Śiva)

aruḷ: 61,67,119,120,143,258,262, 263,265

Asura (Acuraṉ): 84,98,99,100,128, 131,142,161,163,172,185,210,217, 234,248

Āṭi (July-Aug): 146

Avalūrpēṭṭai: 19,98,125,177,178

Avanāci: 88,97,137ff.,172,240,241, 244,245

avatāram, avatāra: 14,35,48,50,51, 76,93,138,153,154,164,165,170,209

āvuṭaiyāl(-r): 55,134,172,179

Āvuṭaiyappaṉ: 144ff.

Ballāḷa: 103,192,198ff.

Bāṇāī: 46

Bara Deo: 58

Bhadrakālī (Pattirakāḷi): 77,83,88, 143,170,234

Bhagavatī (Pakavati): 6,52,83

Bhairava (Vairavar): 75,80,83,172, 176,256,267

Bhairavī: 79

Bhavānī: 240

bilva: 27,28,72,132

blood: 23,59,110,111,115,119,137,147, 149,162ff.,174,176,188,227

blood rice: 35,37,110,112,115,129, 139,142,148,149,162,175,211,226

Brahmā (Piraman): 7ff.,36ff.,40,42, 43,78,121,147,161,165,176ff.,218, 234,267,273,279

Brahma deities: 165,180ff.

Brahmarākṣasī: 206,269

brahminicide, see: *piramakatti*

breasts (three): 46

cakti,śakti (power): 23,38,69,112, 117,186ff.,190,222,224ff.,258ff.

cāmam: 55,239

Cāmi, Cuvāmi: 9,18,34,61,64ff.,69, 157,164,246,256

Camuṇḍā: 79,206

Cāṇār: 26,57

Caṅkili, Caṅkilikkaruppaṉ: 83,175

Cappāṉi: 83

caṭai, jaṭā: 23,26,79,80,109,117, 142,148,149,167,169,186

Caṭaicci: 52,139,143

Cāttaṉūr: 101,136,169

Celliyamman: 52

Cempatavar: 3,4,37,53,60,63,67,70, 73,78,93,98ff.,108,122ff.,126,127, 129,132,135,136,144,155,180,182, 264

Ceṭṭiyār: 61,72,73,87,90,91ff.,93, 95,96,104,156,157

childbirth, pregnancy: 206ff.

ciṅka vākaṇam, simha vāhana: 111, 128,134,143,145,237,245; see: *vākaṇam*

Citamparam: 73,103,104,132,178,187, 197,251

Cittirai (April-May): 131,146

civaṉrāttiri, see: *makācivaṉ-rāttiri*

Civarakkōṭṭai: 62,75,94,96,255

Cōṉai: 83

coolness, cooling: 46,66,218,236,242, 243,244,247,254

copper boat: 34ff.

cremation ground: 4,36,37,84,108ff., 121ff.,128,129ff.,174,190,205ff.,226, 227ff.,232,233,247,269,274,277, 279,280

Cucīntiram: 217

Cūlūr: 84,95,104,138,172,244

cumaṅkali: 50,55

cuṇṭal: 126,128,134,144,178

curel, churelin, cudel: 209ff.

Cuṭalaimāṭaṉ, Cuṭalaimāṭacāmi: 206, 226ff.,229,233

cuttam, śuddha: 39,75,78,81,83,126, 130,139,144,150,153ff.,204,233,246

cuvarūpam, svarūpa: 186,188,189,267

Dakṣa (Takkaṉ): 55,78,98,107,143,150, 151,169,170,171,178,232,233,234,261, 262,279

dance: 68,110,115,186,189,243,258ff., 274,275,279,280

disease, illness, healing: 112,130,133, 170,183,207ff.,216ff.,223ff.,250ff., 269

dog: 20,256,264,269

Draupadī: 242,273

dream: 61,64,70,240,254,256

Durgā (Mahiṣāsuramardinī): 79,111, 128,135,196,246

Durgammā: 58,228

Duryodhana: 164,273

Ekāmrēsvara: 79

Ellammā: 44,45,79

Erumaiveṭṭippāḷaiyam: 92,136

Ettiyammā: 52

Eyiṉar: 79

fangs ('lion's teeth'): 79,80,117, 129,160,169,186

fertility, barrenness: 42,112,115, 123,130,138,170,173ff.,181ff.,197, 207ff.,216,220,223,225,238,241,253

figure in the cremation ground: 104,107,121,159ff.,167ff.,204, 212ff.,220,225,230,235,236,237, 250,259
- Aṅkāḷamman: 126,134,136,143
- Vallāḷarāṇī: 116,130,131,137, 144
- Vallāḷarājaṉ: 132,140,141
- Pārvatī: 109
- other deities: 117,128,136,137, 139,140,145

flag (hoisting): 107,108,127,137, 234ff.

foetus: 11,140,150,173,174,189,198, 205,213,214,225,227,228,231,233

food/hunger: 66,161ff.,205ff.

Gaṇeśa: 122,212,228,267; see: Viṉāyaka

Gaṅgā (Kaṅkai, Kaṅkammā): 21,46, 52

Gaurī: 53

Gurunāthaswāmi (Kurunātacāmi): 83,149

heat, fever: 17,46,66,174,236, 244

Himavat: 279; see: Malaiyaracaṉ

hiraṇyagarbha: 42

Hiraṇyakaśipu: 164,201

hunt(er): 95,146,149,181,244ff.

iluppai tree: 149,170,171

incest: 43,44

Indra (Tēvēntiraṉ): 12,40

intestines: 14,80,82,114ff.,127, 128,129ff.,131,132,134,136,138, 140,143,145,155,159,162,173ff., 188,201ff.,205ff.,213,218,219, 225,226,245,253,259,262

Irācipuram: 76,84,96,142,158,161, 169,187

Īrōṭu: 95,97,141,157,249

Irukūr: 80,84,95,96,104,138,238,241, 244,245,247

Iruḷappaṉ, Iruḷappacāmi: 82,83,139, 143,148,149,150,157,176,189,196, 266,268

Iruḷar: 29

Iruḷāyi: 76,81,83

Īśvarī (Īcuvari): 4,7ff.,40,77,98,138, 177,185ff.,232,252

Jamadagni (Camatakkiṉimuṉivar): 15ff.

Kailāsa, Kailāyam, Kailaṅkiri: 8,9ff., 14,23,25,34,55,56,57,273

Kailāyamūrtti, see: Śiva

kalacam, kalaśa: 49,74,125,129,235ff.

Kālī (Kāḷi): 37,39,52,53,77,80,111, 112,129ff.,141,147,153,165,168,173, 175,189,197,201,206,210,213,217,229, 230,264,266,267,277

Kālikā: 206

Kaḷḷar: 22,88,94

Kallūr: 73,93,104,146,187,188

Kāmākṣī (Kāmāṭci): 21,22,48,50,89,249, 267

Kampam: 71,83,93,257

Kāñcīpuram: 21,22,48,50,71,74,79,176

kāṇi (landmeasure): 27ff.

kaṅkaṇam, kāppu: 107,109,120ff.,139, 234ff.,238,243,247,258

Kaṇṇaki: 56,57

Kaṇṇaṉ (Kṛṣṇa): 7ff.,15,40,45,47,49, 77,164

Kaṇṇappaṉ: 4

Kaṉṉimār: 83,198,245

kaṉṉippuṟṟu, see: termite hill

kapālam, kapāla: 36,37,52,78,79,80, 84,100,116,117ff.,125,161ff.,176ff., 210ff.,260,266,267,274,280

kapālam (brass vessel): 123,131,132, 134,137

Kapāli: 147

kapparai, karpara: 52,107,111ff., 121,123ff.,128,129,137ff.,142, 144,146,147,149,150,154,158, 159ff.,180,204ff.,217,220ff., 225,229,234,236,259
- Brahmā: 111,114,122,123,134, 142,161,180,212
- Trimūrti: 111,123,131,161
- Aṅkāḷamman: 129,161
- *pūvaḷai*: 114,131

karakam, karaka: 107,115,129,235ff., 237,238
- *akkiṉi karakam*: 116,131,235ff.
- *kumpam, kumbha*: 118,120ff.,233, 235ff.,243,244
- *māvucaṭṭi*: 132
- *pūṅkarakam*: 110,122,190,235ff.
- *tīccaṭṭi*: 111,235ff.

Karivaratar (Viṣṇu): 22

karpu (chastity): 15,50,56,198

kārttikai tīpam, kārttika dīpa: 18,102,106,180,248

Karuppaṇṇacāmi, Karuppaṉacāmi: 15, 83,150,188

Kāśī (Varanasi): 20,50,65

Kāśī Viśvanāthaswāmi: 144

Kāṭamar celvi: 206

Kāttavarāyaṉ: 15,66,109,126

Kāttavīriyārjuṉaṉ: 15

Kāṭṭēri: 13,114ff.,127,129,131,134, 145,165,173,174,175,268

kāṭu (forest, wilderness): 57,151, 187,188,193ff.; see also: cremation ground

kāval: 12,82,83,84,118ff.,126, 128,130,140,141,148,149,150, 161,167,171ff.,189,193,197, 204,210,215

Kavuntar: 73,85,87,90,95,97,114, 116,131,143,157

Khaṇḍobā: 58

Kīḻākkuḷam: 4,55,73,95,96,97,104, 150ff.,227,233ff.,235,239

Kīḻapāvūr: 4,87,89,96,97,104,150ff., 233ff.,239

kiḻavi (the goddess as an old woman): 27ff.,50ff.,185ff.,191,197

koḷḷai, see: *mayāṉakkoḷḷai*

koḷḷu: 134,135,219

koḻukkaṭṭai: 36,37,112,113,124,126, 128,144,178,218

Kōṉār: 93,95

kōpuram: 71,103,189

Korravai: 57

kōṭaṅki: 170,171,255

kōṭṭai: 70,118,134,146,167,171,172, 185ff.,195,204,245

Kōvai: 72,75,104,140,141,153,172, 185,187,188,190,195,198,236,244

Kṛṣṇa, see: Kaṇṇaṉ

kula teyvam, kula-deva,-devī: 53, 60,67,82,87ff.,101,106,136,147, 156,191ff.,252

kuḻavi (grinding stone): 60ff., 70

Kumpakōṇam: 147,163,185,187,189,196

kumpam, see: *karakam*

kuṇam, guṇa: 6ff.,43

kuṅkumam: 109,119,128,134,144,177,236

Kunnattūr: 4,87,97,140,141,155,171, 214,244,249

kuṇṭam iṟaṅkutal (walking over hot coals): 3,105,107,117,121,137,155, 156,190,222,230,234,235,236,237, 238,242ff.

Kuppucciputūr: 84,85,95,96,138,139ff., 150,153,159,172,173,185,187,189, 204,213

kuṟatti: 13ff.,50,129,131,136,187,194

kuṟavaṉ: 136

kuṟiñci tiṇai: 54ff.

Kurukkaḷ: 85,87,89,93,97,104,106,116, 118,144

Kurunātacāmi, see: Gurunāthaswāmi

kuṭal piṭuṅki mālai: 114,131; see also: intestines

Kūttaippār: 88

Kūttaṉūr: 25

Lakṣmī (Laṭcumi): 17,20,40,

Lāṭacannāci: 83

lime(s): 111,118ff.,127,133, 134,143,144,219,238,257

liminality: 39,114,193ff.,206ff.

Liṅgāyat: 88,104,140,199

liver: 82,111,115,134,136, 138,139,140,143,145,174, 213,218,219,225,245,246

loss of power: 45

Macāṉacāmi: 227

Mācānakaruppucuvāmi: 148ff., 170ff.,237

Macāṉaṉ: 93

Macāniyamman: 76,84ff.,116ff., 138ff.,153ff.,158,184,204, 215,229,230,242ff.

Māci(Feb-March): 53,64,73,88, 93,103,106,108,117,121,124, 132,136,141,142,144,154,155, 157,178,222,275

madness, fury: 111,143,165,178, 220,225,259ff.,269; see also: *veṟi, pittu*

Madras
- Cintātiripēṭṭai: 78,81,101, 144ff.
- Cūḷai: 46,59,66,68,75,81ff., 83,131,144ff.,161,166,177, 178,248,251,261
- Irāyapuram: 73,75,81,83,93,97, 144ff.,156
- Mint: 96

magic: 7,20,42,183,187,194,197, 231,252

Mahādēviyakkā: 54

Mahendravarman: 176

Maheśvarī (Makēcuvari): 6ff.

Maheśvara (Makēcuvarar); see: Śiva

Mahiṣa: 79,248,270

makācivanrāttiri, mahāśivarātri: 36,55,106ff.,127ff.,129,132,135, 141,142,144,146,147,149,150,151, 157,222,233,239,241,246,255

Makāmuṉi: 83

makimai, mahimā: 27

Malaiyaracaṉ (Parvatarājaṉ): 27ff., 34ff.,40,54,65,98,99

Maṇattaṭṭai: 96,146

māṉ (deer): 4,245

Manasā: 58

mañcaḷ nīr (āṭutal): 107,116,121,130, 247ff.

maṇi: 6ff.,42

maṇṭapam, maṇḍapa: 4,55,74,79,80,91, 103,239

mantiram, mantra: 6ff.,20,42,43,57, 109,124,186,188,267,269

Maṟavar: 22,57,92,94

Margosa (Nim): 13,110,134,136,150,170, 174,218,236

Māriyamman: 16,51ff.,56,66,76,79,87, 95,156,165,168,242,267,278

Mārkaḻi (Dec-Jan): 103

maruḷ: 110,124

mask: 161, 165ff.

Māṭacāmi, Cuṭalaimāṭaṉ: 150

Maturai
- Kurunātan: 77,104,149,160,161,162, 168,203,205,211,213,237
- Rl. Station: 94,204,246,255,256
- Mīnākṣī College: 75

Maturai Vīraṉ: 75,83,157,188

māviḷakku: 18,113,114,129,134,161,236

mayānakkoḷḷai: 53,64,75,84,104,106ff., 221ff.,227,232,242,275

Māyāṇṭi: 83

Māyavaṉ, see: Kaṇṇaṉ

Mayāṉavīraṉ: 128,167,168

medicine: 30,42,43,250

Melaṭṭūr: 147,174

Mēl Malaiyanūr: 3,4,33ff.,37,40,49,50, 53,55,58,59,63,64,71,73,74,75,77, 78,91,96,101,103,117,121ff.,126,127, 132,154,157,162,168,169,173,178, 180,186,187,189,192,194,196,212,228, 235,247,248,250,251,264,266,275,277, 279

Mhaskobā: 58
midwife (*maruttuvacci*): 13,184ff.
milk money: 46,48
Mīṉamaharṣi: 35,98
Mīnākṣī: 46,48
moccai: 134,135,143,219
Muciri: 88,96,104,145,156,174, 248,253
Mūdevī (Mūtēvi): 20
mukappallaiyam: 138
mukūrttam, muhūrta: 205
mūlava mūrtti: 75,78
Muḷuṅkalāttā: 52
muni, munivar, Munīśvara (Munīcuvarar): 24,49,83,118,121,267, 269,280
Mūppaṉār: 88,147
mūrtti, mūrti: 53,61,62,72,78, 121,125,182,220,242,243,244,256
Murukaṉ: 23,75,81,83,198,277
muruṅkaikkāy: 112,113,218
Mutaliyār: 73,87,88ff.,91,93, 95,97,104,118,146,151
Muttāḷamman: 25,50,125
Muttanampālaiyam: 77,89,138,141, 170,171,185,187,188,189,197, 204,214
muttu (pearl, pox): 17,25,66
myth 3: 3,5,57,81,116,126,135, 138,139,146,147,156,159,170, 171,173ff.,179,184ff.,205, 209,215,221,232,252,262
myth 12: 5,57,114,116,123,135, 138,158,161ff.,166,173,176ff., 234,262,264

naivēttiyam, naivedya: 37
Nākacarpam: 83
nākakkal ('serpent stone'): 75
Nākamman: 58
Nandin: 4,99,241,274
Nārada (Nāratamuṉivar): 9ff.,48,199
Narasiṃha: 80,164,201
Nāṭār: 93,96
Nattam: 93,147
Nāṭṭār, see: Cempaṭavar
Nāṭṭukkalpāḷaiyam: 4,72,81,92,141
navakkirakam, navagraha: 75
navarāttiri, navarātri: 106,248
Nāyakkar: 64,85,87,94,148,154
Nāyuṭu: 85,89ff.,91,93,97,113,125
nerrikkaṇ (eye on the forehead): 6ff. 15,42,43
Nīlī: 7
Nim, see: Margosa
nīr āṭutal: 107
Niśāsinī: 11ff.,54,82
offerings (of food): 113,118ff.,122, 127,132,133,139,143,175,212ff.
old woman (goddess as), see: *kiḻavi*
Ōmalūr: 4,104,142,162
Orraikkālmantapam: 3,73,82,95,96,137ff., 159,162,171,172,175,185,187,189, 237,238,244
Ottar: 31ff.

paccai (green): 21,22,24,25,50
pācam, pāśa: 78,79,80,98
pakti, bhakti: 257ff.
pālai tiṇai: 57
pali pīṭam, bali pīṭha: 55,74
Pallaṭam: 84,85,138,154,172,236,244
pampai: 3,4,116,174,186,234,267
pampaikkārar: 3,4,108ff.,116ff.,131, 136,140,142,146,149,151,160,162, 234,236,240,247
pañcamukam, pañca mukha: 6ff.
Paṅkuṉi (Mar-Apr): 106,113
pantal: 23,24,188
Pantāram: 70,87ff.,92,97,104,106, 118,136

pāṇṭi: 65

Paramakkuṭi: 150,239,245

Paramaśiva (Paramacivaṉ), see: Śiva

paramparai, paramparā:96,203

Paraśurāma (Paracurāmar): 15ff.

Paravar: 99,100,103

pariṭcai (tests): 107,220,237ff.

parivāra-deities: 74,75,81,83,172

pārivēṭṭai: 107,145,146,175,244ff.

Parvatarājaṉ, see: Malaiyaracaṉ

Pārvatī: 9,33,40,41,48,51ff., 65,66,68,89,99,109,123,154, 166,167,169,177,179,205,233, 261,264,273,274,280

Paṭṭiṉavar: 100

paurṇami, purṇimā: 113,146

pāvam (sin): 11,22,25,48,56,66 116,131

Pāvātairāyaṉ: 19,81ff.,109,114ff., 126,129,147,197,240,266,268, 277,279

Pēcci: 52,75,76,80ff.,84,107,138ff., 140,141,143,145ff.,153ff.,157,159, 163,167,173,197,206,209,219,226, 227,233,259,260

Peddammā: 44,45

Periyakuḷam: 62,71,93,96,175,249, 253

Perumpākkam: 95,131,236

Periyāṇṭicci: 143

Periyāyi: 169

Perūr: 76,97,137ff.,167,171,172, 173,213,236,254

pēy, picācu, piśāca (malevolent spirits): 4,37,80,100,111,112, 117,119,123,124,130,135,138,143, 162ff.,181ff.,186ff.,188,190,202, 205ff.,219ff.,223ff.,252ff.

Pēymaciri: 139

Pillai: 85,93,97,154

Pillaimār: 73,94,104

pillaippāvu: 75,107,114,124,128ff., 137ff.,140,145ff.,155,157,158, 173ff.,212,214,215,233,245

Pillaiyār: 46,109,134,167,172,173

piṇam (dead body): 113ff.,157ff.,162, 168 ff.,186ff.,205ff.

piracātam, prasāda:81,109,110,121,130, 132,137,143,147,149,174,214,223,243, 250,253,260

piramakatti, piramātti: 36,114,135,138, 159ff.,212,217,225

pittu: 17,36,37,170,225,259ff.

Polḷācci: 76,185

Pommiyammāḷ: 147

poṅkal: 37,92,140,189,255

Poṅkāliyammaṉ: 87,156

possession: 64,67,110,113,119,120,123, 129,132,133,136,140,143,144,149,170, 181,182,190,205ff.,220,221,226,227, 231,243,254,257ff.

Pōtumpūr: 83

pox: 17,18

prohibition of animal sacrifices: 40, 75,122,154

pūlōkam, bhūloka: 12

Pūṅkāvaṉam: 78,157,170,266ff.,275

puṇṇiyam, puṇya: 67,244

puṟṟu, see: termite hill

pūtam, bhūta: 4,32,37,70,193,266, 269,280

Rākkāyi: 83,167,175,228

Rāksasa (Arakkar, Rātcatar): 12,14,34, 77,99,117,151,164,172,233,280

Rāma: 117,164,184,204,229

Rāvaṇa: 117,164

Ravivarman Kulaśekhara: 74

Rātāpuram: 43,49,60,70,98,101,136,155, 159,161ff.,177,178,185,256,264

Reṇukā (Irēṇukai): 15ff.,56,66

Reṭṭiyār: 70,91,98,136

robbers: 22 ff., 50,57,102

Rudra (Ruttiran), see: Śiva

Sacrifices: 75,164,171,212,215, 223,227
- animal: 75,111,129,133,134, 136ff.,174,181,184,210,212ff., 215,228ff.,245,246,248
- triple (*mukkāvu*): 137,140,141, 147ff.,157,164,215
- human: 79,140,214
- pumpkin (*pūcanikkāy*):111,119, 134,140,145,147,245

Śakti (Cakti), personified: 6ff., 34,41,47,51,53,57,66,69,135,164, 196,239,264,266ff.

Śankarācārya: 102

Satī: 169

Satyaloka (Cattiyalōkam): 8

seven sisters: 52ff.

Sītā: 56

Śiva (Civan): 7ff.,40,43,54ff.,65, 77,79,89,99,101,123,131,135,147, 161ff.,199ff.,232,233,234,239, 240,241,261,267,273,277,279,280
- as child: 12,81,82,144,172,189, 192,196ff.
- as Kapālin: 161,176,178,179
- as opponent of goddess: 68,192ff., 196ff.

snake: 29,31,41,42,58,69,79,117, 129,172,181,183,186,189,191, 194,251ff.,279

Subrahmaṇya (Cuppiramaṇiyam): 19, 99,232

Tai (Jan-Feb): 102,106,117

tamarind: 112,162,218

Tamparettipāḷaiyam: 98,136,213

Tañcāvūr: 91,104,147,257

tavam, tapas: 12,13,21,36,37,49, 55,56,58,98,99,178,179,187,232, 239,242,270,273,277,279

Tāyanūr: 19,20,21,25,50,77,88, 117,125,186,188

Teli: 4,5,59,89,96,98,113ff., 121,131,161,168,173,177,178, 179,187,196,221,235

teppam āṭutal: 107,247ff.

tēr: 49,90,107,116,121,156,243,247ff.

termite hill: 29,30,41,58ff.,65,69, 73,84,91,121,122,133,139,141,157, 167,186,189,194,211,215,250

Tēvar: 64,73,85,89,94ff.,104,139, 148,150,237

Tintivanam: 52,77,101,108,125,127,129, 135,159,167,175,177,178,179,187, 189,196,247,251

tīpārātanai, dīpārādhana: 110,112,119, 120,129,131,134,236,243

tīpāvali, dīpāvali: 61

tiricūlam, triśūla: 6ff.,43,52,75,78, 79,80,84,117,118,120,127,144,150, 253,267,269

tīrttam, tīrtha: 92,103,107,237

Tiruccirāppalli
- Pūkkulam: 4,52,77,80,129,139,146ff., 174,185,189
- Uraiyūr: 92,104,146,174,187,188,189, 248

tirumaṅkaliyam (tāli): 22,23,252,266

Tiruvannāmalai: 18,25,73,98,101,102, 104,136,162,177,178,187

Trimūrti, Tirimūrtti, Mummūrtti: 7ff., 40,43,47,126,164,191ff.,218

Umā (Umai): 4ff.,20,40,165,198,268, 273

union (wedding): 41,44,52,54,99,100, 107

Urappuli: 94,104,150,174,175,239,246

uṟcava mūrtti, utsava mūrti: 79,110, 111,115,144

Uṭaiyār: 89,90,95

uṭukkai (damaru): 3,4,78,79,80,84,108, 117,174

Vaikāci (May-June): 106,125,136,148, 156

Vaikuntha (Vaikuntam): 8,34,

vākaṇam, vāhana: 70,110,111,112,115, 127,130,151,221,236,248

Vālācāpāt: 4,63,72,73,104,107ff.,121, 159,162,165,167,169,175,205,213, 220,221,235,236,255,259

Vālājāpettai: 72,99,104,132ff.,
155,159,161,169,172,177,178,
179,187,188,204,212,259

Vālāntūr 94,148,156,162,170,
215,229,237,246,247,

Vallālarājan, Vallālakaṇṭaṇ:
4,11ff.,49,76,77,103,124,126,131,
132,135,138ff.,145ff.,151,154,
161,171,172,184ff.,196,199,204,
210,215,219,269

Vallālarājan's wife: 80,139,144,
154,159,161,167,168,171,186ff.,
215

Valḷi: 46,81

vaṉṉi tree: 75

Vanniyar (Paṭaiyāṭci): 90ff.,
104,125,132

varalāṟu: 1,5,6,40,117,119,129

Vaṭivēlkarai: 83

Velḷāḷar: 61,85,89,92,104,149,157

Veṅkampūr: 3,4,59,61,75,81,93,141,
156,170,187,188,189,249

veṟi: 112,125,135,259ff.

vēṣam: 111,114ff.,123,125,126,
127ff.,129,134,136,140,142ff.,
159,175,251,257,260,262

Vēṭar: 3,4,95

vicuvarūpam, viśvarūpa: 13,14,
169,

Viluppuram: 53,81,100,101,129ff.
150,153,159,161,169,175,180,
213,236

vimāṉam: 74,121

Vināyaka(r): 19,35,36,54,81,83,
95,173,232

vipūti, vibhūti: 83,109,110,120,
131,144,167,174,187,189,237,
243,253,258,260

Vīrabhadra (Vīrapattiraṉ): 13,19,
22,81,83,95,126,127,131,132,140,
149,150,157,163,167,171,186,188,
192,196,197,232,233,234,266,268

Vīrammā: 52

Vīrapāṇṭi: 96,104,107,142,150,
164,173,229,231ff.

Viśālākṣī (Vicālāṭci): 20,50,93,144

Viṣṇu (Mahāviṣṇu): 7,17ff.,21ff.,34,
40,43ff.,68,98,135,147,176,177,
178,267,269,274

wife (second, of god): 46

winnowing fan: 11,110,111,115,127,
129,132,138,139,140,142,143,145,
148,151,159,173ff.,213ff.,259

yākam, yāga: 78,170

Yama (Emaṉ): 17,34,79,98

Yātavar: 91

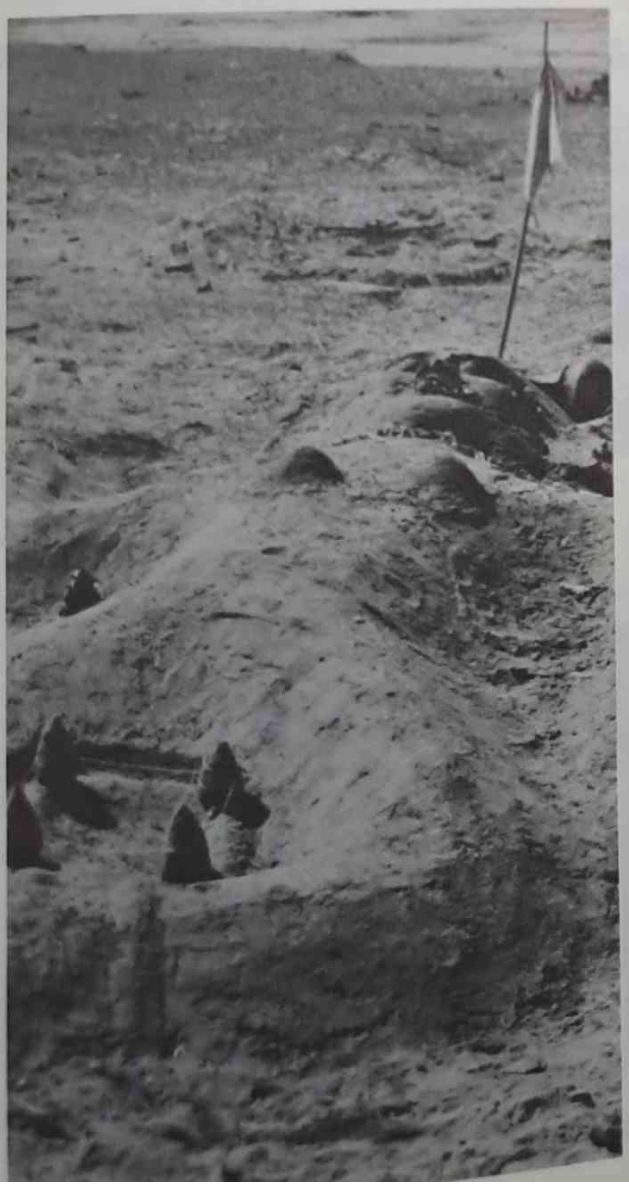
Yerukula: 191,194

yukam, yuga: 6,7,164
- *tuvāpara, dvāpara*:11,19,164,273
- *kali*: 11,48,49,56,68,164,257,273
- *kirētā, kṛta*: 9,11,19,164,273
- *tirētā, tretā*: 9,11,19,164,273



1 Irācipuram: Aṅkāḷamman̲

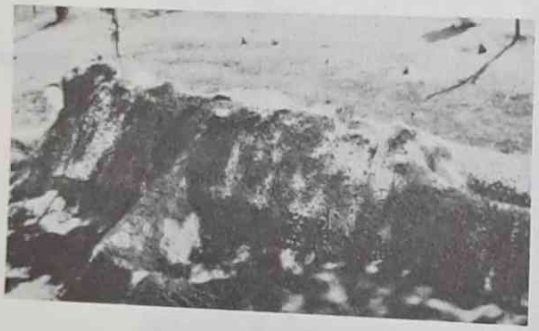




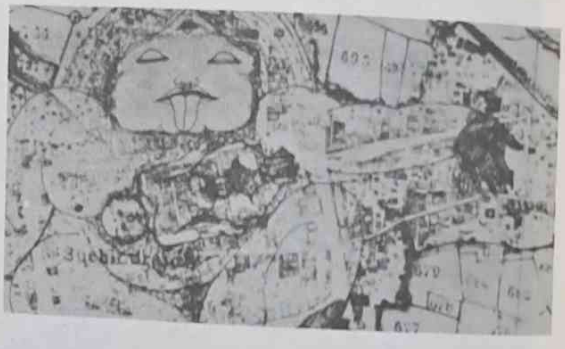
2 Vālācāpāt:
Figure in the cremation ground -
Pārvatī



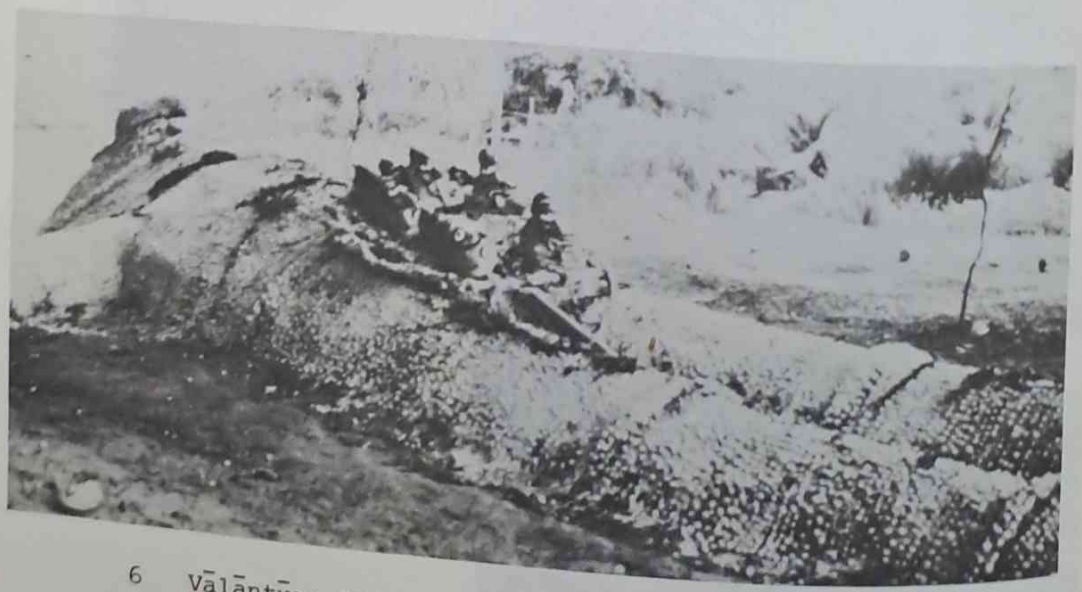
3 Āṉaimalai: *pampaikkārar* models figure of Mācāṇiyamman in the cremation ground



4 Vālāntūr



5 Cucīntiram



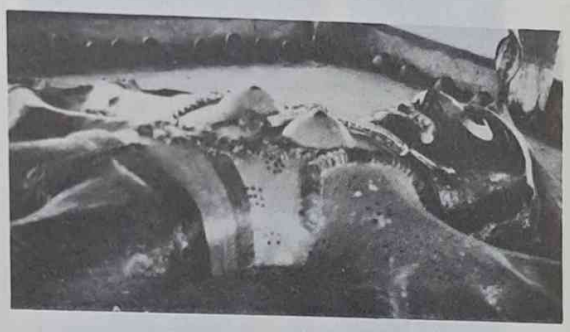
6 Vālāntūr: Figure of Mācāṇakkaruppucuvāmi with *kapparai*



7 Cūlūr: Macāṉaruttiri



9 Irukūr: Mayāṉa Īcuvari



8 Irukūr: Mayāṉa Īcuvari



10 Irācipuram: Pēcci (in the Aṅkāḷammaṉ temple)



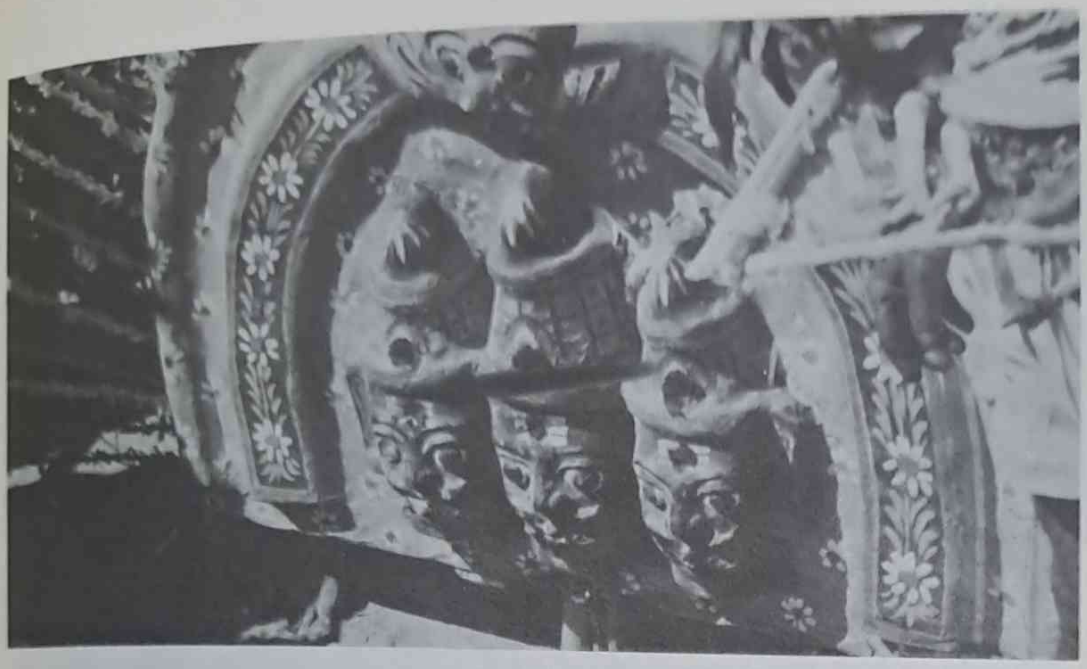
11 Teḷi: Kāṭṭēri *vēṣam*



12 Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (Pūkkuḷam): Pēcci *vēṣam*



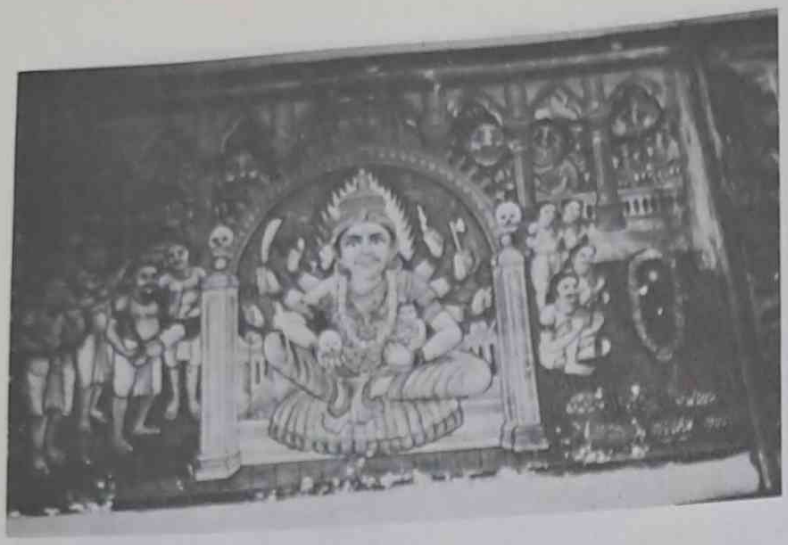
13 Teḷi: Aṅkāḷammaṉ *vēṣam* (She holds the intestines in her mouth and carries a winnowing fan.)



14 Vālācāpāt: *kapparai*
(heads of Brahmā)



15 Matural, Kurunātacāmi temple:
kapparai



16 Irukūr: Pēcciyamman (wall painting)



17 Tiṇṭivaṉam: Statue on top of temple wall. The goddess pulls the intestines from Vallāḷarāṇī's abdomen



18 Tañcāvūr: Pēcci



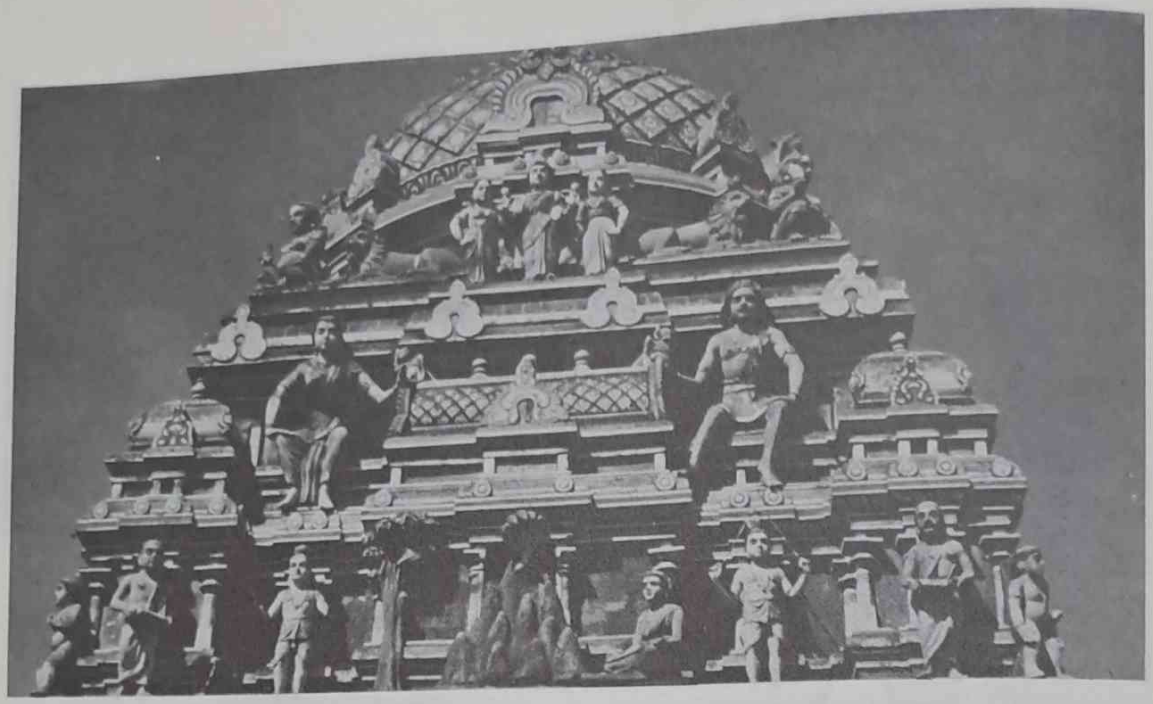
19 Tiruccirāppalli (Pūkkulam): *pampaikkārar*



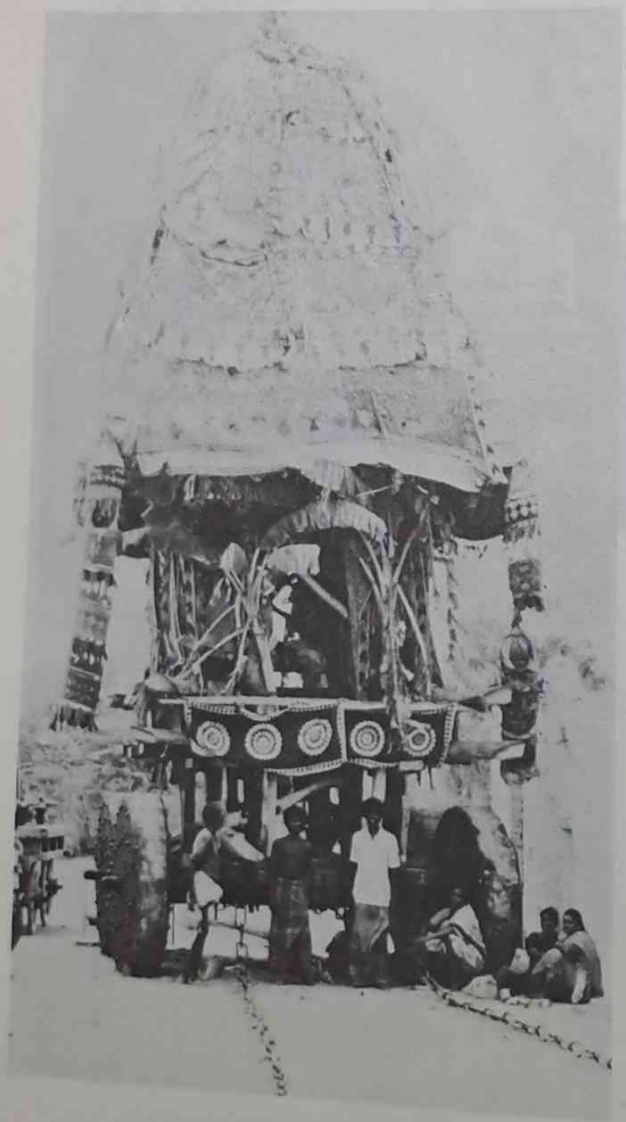
20 Mēl Malaiyaṉūr: devotees who collected the sacred water



21 Vālācāpāt: *pūṅkarakam*



22 Nāṭṭukkalpāḷaiyam: temple tower. At bottom, in middle: termite hill and snake



23 Mēl Malaiyaṉūr: the big temple chariot



24 Maturai, Kurunātacāmi temple: Pēcci, decorated during the festival



25 Maturai, Kurunātacāmi temple: Aṅkāḷammaṉ, decorated during the festival

